This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

KF
16367

EX LIBRIS RUSSELL GRAY

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

... OF THE PRESS ON

... OF OUR OWN TIME ...

... STIN McCARTHY, M.P.

...ON. *Four Volumes, demy ...*

...ON. *Four Volumes, crown ...*

...s finished the laborious ...

... But to have made ...

Mr. McCarthy has achieved ...

...s must fulfil is, no doubt, ...

... should tell us all we want ...

...erything in the right ...

...ance may be given ...

... condition is that ...

...puffed nor maligned ...

...the author, ...

...o the side which ...

...e entertaining ...

...roughout, that ...

...ing himself ...

...martness, ...

...ions Mr. ...

... cannot be ...

Mr. ...

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS ON

A HISTORY OF OUR OWN TIMES.

By JUSTIN McCARTHY, M.P.

LIBRARY EDITION. Four Volumes, demy 8vo. 12s. each.

POPULAR EDITION. Four Volumes, crown 8vo. 6s. each.

'Mr. McCarthy has finished the laborious and difficult task which he set before himself. . . . . But to have made his work complete is only a part of the success which Mr. McCarthy has achieved. The first condition which a history of our times must fulfil is, no doubt, that it should be a history of our own times, that it should tell us all we want to know, should tell no more, and should teach everything in the right perspective, so that the due amount of space and importance may be given to each successive event, or group of events. The next condition is that it must be fair, that contemporaries should be neither puffed nor maligned, that actions should be fairly interpreted, and that the author, while letting his readers know his opinions, should do justice to the side which he does not adopt. The third condition is that it should be entertaining, that the writer should have a good style and write well throughout, that he should perpetually make himself felt by his readers as being himself and no one else, and yet that he should avoid paradoxes, mere smartness, and the appearance of making epigrams to order. All these conditions Mr. McCarthy has fulfilled. His work is fairly exhaustive; but it cannot be said that it is ever prolix. . . . . Then, it is eminently fair. Mr. McCarthy is temperate, reasonable, and judicious; his History is eminently entertaining, and his power of entertaining has reader never flags. He never seems to be exhausted, and his fourth volume is perhaps the best of the set. To say that this work is as pleasant and attractive to read as a novel is to pay a great compliment to novels. Almost every page has something in it that is good, because it is at once unexpected and yet not forced. The book is pervaded with a gentle spirit of subdued fun, and yet is never frivolous or comic. Mr. McCarthy has not only the art of story-telling, but makes his narrative sparkle with happy hits, and yet these happy hits do not eclipse the more modest bulk of the story. There are so many bad books which must be criticised severely, that it is refreshing to come across a book which may be freely praised.'—SATURDAY REVIEW.

'Of modern historians, Mr. Justin McCarthy is among the most eminent. His rise was sudden. Known in literature as a successful novelist, it was not till the appearance of his first two volumes on the reign of Victoria that he obtained rank as a more serious writer. His History at once took the reading world by storm. The buoyancy of his narrative, his powers of picturesque description, his epigrammatic judgment of character, his lucid arrangement of facts, and the clear, fresh manner in which he dealt with his story and gave his opinions, charmed alike the philosophical student as well as the general reader. . . . . The end is as good as the beginning; there is no falling off, and nothing to tempt invidious criticism. . . . . Mr. McCarthy's History is now finished, and we have no hesitation in saying that it is one of the ablest works that the latter part of this century has produced. It is written with spirit, yet accuracy is not sacrificed for effect; it is lively without flippancy, and when the occasion calls for sobriety of judgment the author can be judicial without being opinionated, and thoughtful without being dull.'—OBSERVER.

Digitized by Google

'We have read the volumes throughout with unflagging interest, and have received from their pages an amount of pleasure equal to the enjoyment derivable from the perusal of one of Mr. McCarthy's most stirring and telling novels. Mr. McCarthy has written, in a popular and effective style, an important and useful work.'—MORNING POST.

'Without being any the less readable, this latter half of Mr. McCarthy's work is more dignified and thorough than the previous one. Finding his book accepted as an important historical work, Mr. McCarthy has honestly endeavoured to prove himself a good historian as well as a brilliant novelist and leader-writer. . . . . Whatever the causes, the new volumes show a marked improvement on the old ones, good as those were; and the improvement is all the more notable because the difficulties of the historian are naturally increased the nearer he gets to his own day. . . . . The work is one that Tories can read with almost as much pleasure as Radicals, and in which there is no obtrusion of the author's opinions on Home Rule.'—ATHENÆUM.

'Happier than many historians who have marked out for themselves a task of labour and difficulty, Mr. McCarthy has completed his "History of Our Own Times" within the limits originally intended, and certainly without any unreasonable delay. In the two solid volumes, which form the second and concluding portion of the work, he tells the story of our national life during the last twenty-four years. . . . If the duty which he has imposed upon himself has, of necessity, become more delicate as the course of the narrative brings us more and more within the heated atmosphere of contemporary politics, the historian has found his recompense in the higher opportunities afforded him for exhibiting the tact and judgment conspicuous in his former volumes. The wide and genuine popularity of his History is a circumstance perhaps without parallel in the case of works of its class.'—DAILY NEWS.

'Mr. McCarthy has executed a very difficult task with no slight success. He has evidently made a very careful and complete survey of the best contemporary authorities, exhibits an impartial, almost judicial tone throughout, and writes with an unaffected vigour and simple direct picturesqueness which are decidedly attractive. . . . The work will, we have no doubt, speedily become essential to every good library.'—NONCONFORMIST.

'We can hardly conceive that any one out of all the thousands of Mr. McCarthy's readers has ever felt otherwise than delighted at the interesting, brilliant, and thoroughly fair and judicial way in which he has narrated the history which he set himself to record. We may at once state that the last two volumes are worthy to read with the first two. They are as careful, as fascinating, as interesting as the first; in no single point falling short of the high level which the author attained in the moiety which he gave us eighteen months ago. In short, we will confirm that Mr. McCarthy is novelist, essayist, politician, moralist, and historian at one and the same time. He has provided us in these magnificent volumes with writing which is as charming as any English writer of our day has given us, with a story which possesses often the intense interest of fiction, with reflections worthy of the profoundest moralist or most eloquent religious teacher. We have no hesitation in saying that these four volumes are in every respect worthy to take their place beside those splendid volumes of Macaulay's History which, in our own judgment, marked by their publication an epoch in historical literature, and gave a new spirit and character to historical writing.'—LITERARY WORLD.

London : CHATTO & WINDUS, Piccadilly, W.

Digitized by Google

A HISTORY
OF
THE FOUR GEORGES

FIRST VOLUME

Digitized by Google

LONDON: PRINTED BY
SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE
AND PARLIAMENT STREET

Digitized by Google

A HISTORY

OF

THE FOUR GEORGES

BY

JUSTIN McCARTHY, M.P.

AUTHOR OF 'A HISTORY OF OUR OWN TIMES' ETC.

IN FOUR VOLUMES—VOL. I.

London

CHATTO & WINDUS, PICCADILLY

1884

[*The right of translation is reserved*]

Digitized by Google

KF16367

Digitized by Google

CONTENTS

OF

THE FIRST VOLUME.

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	'‘MORE, ALAS! THAN THE QUEEN'S LIFE!'	1
II.	PARTIES AND LEADERS	20
III.	'LOST FOR WANT OF SPIRIT'	51
IV.	THE KING COMES	73
V.	WHAT THE KING CAME TO	83
VI.	OXFORD'S FALL; BOLINGBROKE'S FLIGHT	119
VII.	THE WHITE COCKADE	152
VIII.	AFTER THE REBELLION	177
IX.	'MALICE DOMESTIC—FOREIGN LEVY,'	199
X.	HOME AFFAIRS	220
XI.	'THE EARTH HATH BUBBLES'	240
XII.	AFTER THE STORM	265
XIII.	THE BANISHMENT OF ATTERBURY	277
XIV.	WALPOLE IN POWER AS WELL AS OFFICE	294
XV.	THE DRAPIER'S LETTERS	315
XVI.	THE OPPOSITION	326
XVII.	'OSNABRUCK! OSNABRUCK!'	343
XVIII.	GEORGE THE SECOND	356
XIX.	'THE PATRIOTS'	372
XX.	A VICTORY FOR THE PATRIOTS	392

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

A HISTORY

OF

THE FOUR GEORGES

CHAPTER I.

'MORE, ALAS! THAN THE QUEEN'S LIFE!'

'THE QUEEN is pretty well,' Swift wrote to Lord Peterborough on May 18, 1714, 'at present, but the least disorder she has puts all in alarm.' Swift goes on to tell his correspondent that 'when it is over we act as if she were immortal, neither is it possible to persuade people to make any preparations against an evil day.' Yet on the condition of Queen Anne's health depended to all appearance the continuance of peace in England. While Anne was sinking down to death rival claimants were planning to seize the throne; rival statesmen and rival parties were plotting, intriguing, sending emissaries, moving troops, organising armies, for a great struggle. Queen Anne had reigned for little more than twelve years. She succeeded William the Third on March 8, 1702, and at the time when Swift wrote the words

Digitized by Google

we have quoted, her reign was drawing rapidly to a close.

Anne was not a woman of great capacity, or of elevated moral tone. She was moral indeed in the narrow and more limited sense which the word has lately come to have amongst us. She always observed decorum and propriety herself; she always discouraged vice in others; but she had no idea of political morality or of high political purpose, and she had allowed herself to be made the instrument of one faction or another, according as one old woman or the other prevailed over her passing mood. While she was governed by the Duchess of Marlborough, the Duke of Marlborough and his party had the ascendant. When Mrs. Masham succeeded in establishing herself as chief favourite, the Duke of Marlborough and his followers went down. Burnet, in his 'History of My Own Times,' says of Queen Anne, that she 'is easy of access, and hears everything very gently; but opens herself to so few, and is so cold and general in her answers, that people soon find that the chief application is to be made to her ministers and favourites, who in their turns have an entire credit and full power with her: she has laid down the splendour of a Court too much, and eats privately; so that, except on Sundays, and a few hours twice or thrice a week at night in the drawing room, she appears so little, that her Court is, as it were, abandoned.' Although Anne lived during the Augustan age of English literature, she had no literary capacity or taste. Kneller's portrait of the

Digitized by Google

Queen gives her a face rather agreeable and intelligent than otherwise, a round full face with ruddy complexion and dark brown hair. A courtly biographer commenting on this portrait takes occasion to observe that Anne 'was so universally beloved that her death was more sincerely lamented than that of perhaps any other monarch who ever sat on the throne of these realms.' A curious comment on that affection and devotion of the English people to Queen Anne is supplied by the fact which Lord Stanhope mentions, that 'the funds rose considerably on the first tidings of her danger, and fell again on a report of her recovery.'

England watched with the greatest anxiety the latest days of Queen Anne's life, not out of any deep concern for the Queen herself, but simply because of the knowledge that with her death must come a crisis and might come a revolution. Who was to snatch the crown as it fell from Queen's Anne's dying head? Over at Herrenhausen in Hanover was one claimant to the throne; flitting between Lorraine and St. Germains was another. Here, at home, in the Queen's very council chamber, round the Queen's dying bed, were the English heads of the rival parties caballing against each other, some of them deceiving Hanover, some of them deceiving James Stuart, and more than one, it must be confessed, deceiving at the same moment Hanoverians and Stuarts alike. Anne had no children living; she had borne to her husband, the feeble and colourless George of Denmark, a great many children, eighteen or nineteen it is said, but

Digitized by Google

most of them died in their very infancy, and none lived to maturity. No succession could therefore take place, but only an accession, and at such a crisis in the history of England any deviation from the direct line must bring peril with it. At the time when Queen Anne lay dying it might have meant a new revolution and another civil war.

While Anne lies on that which is soon to be her death-bed, let us take a glance at the rival claimants of her crown and the leading English statesmen who were partizans on this side or on that, or who were still hesitating about the side it would be on the whole most prudent and profitable to choose.

The English Parliament had taken steps immediately after the Revolution of 1688 to prevent a restoration of the Stuart dynasty. The Bill of Rights, passed in the first year of the reign of William and Mary, declared that the crown of England should pass in the first instance to the heirs of Mary, then to the Princess Anne, her sister, and to the heirs of the Princess Anne, and after that to the heirs, if any, of William by any subsequent marriage. Mary, however, died childless; William was sinking into years and in miserable health, apparently only waiting and anxious for death, and it was clear that he would not marry again. The only one of Anne's many children who approached maturity, the Duke of Gloucester, died just after his eleventh birthday. The little duke was a pupil of Bishop Burnet, and was a child of great promise. Readers of fiction will remember that Henry Esmond in Thackeray's novel is de-

Digitized by Google

scribed as having obtained some distinction in his academical course, 'his Latin poem on the "Death of the Duke of Gloucester," Princess Anne of Denmark's son, having gained him a medal and introduced him to the society of the University wits.' After the death of this poor child it was thought necessary that some new step should be taken to cut off the chances of the Stuarts. The Act of Settlement, passed in 1701, excluded the sons or successors of James the Second and all other Catholic claimants from the throne of England, and entailed the crown on the Electress Sophia of Hanover as the nearest Protestant heir, in case neither the reigning king nor the Princess Anne should have issue. The Electress Sophia was the mother of George, afterwards the First of England. She seems to have had good sense as well as talent; her close friend Leibnitz once said of her that she was not only given to asking why, but also wanted to know the why of the whys. She was not very anxious to see her son George made sovereign of England, and appeared to be under the impression that his training and temper would not allow him to govern with a due regard for the notions of constitutional liberty which prevailed even then among Englishmen. It even seems that Sophia made the suggestion that James Stuart, the Old Pretender, as he has since been called, would do well to become a Protestant, go in for constitutional government, and thus have a chance of the English throne. It is certain that she strongly objected to his being compared with Perkin Warbeck or called a bastard.

Digitized by Google

She accepted, however, the position offered to her and her son by the Act of Settlement, and appears to have become gradually reconciled to it, and even as she sank into years is said to have expressed a hope many times that the name of Queen of England might be inscribed upon her coffin. She came very near to the gratification of her wish. She died in June 1714, being then in her eighty-fourth year; only a very few days before Queen Anne received her first warning of the near approach of death. Her son George succeeded to her claim upon the crown of England.

The reigning House of Hanover was one of those lucky families which appear to have what may be called a gift of inheritance. There are some such houses among European sovereignties; whenever there is a breach in the continuity of succession anywhere, one or other of them is sure to come in for the inheritance. George the Elector, who was now waiting to become King of England as soon as the breath should be out of Anne's body, belonged to the House of Guelf, or Welf, said to have been founded by Guelf, the son of Isembert, a count of Altdorf, and Irmintrude, sister of Charlemagne, early in the ninth century. It had two branches, which were united in the eleventh century by the marriage of one of the Guelf ladies to Albert Azzo the Second, Lord of Este and Marquis of Italy. His son Guelf obtained the Bavarian possessions of his wife's stepfather, a Guelf of Bavaria. One of his descendants, called Henry the Lion, married Maud, daughter of Henry the

Digitized by Google

Second of England, and became the founder of the family of Brunswick. War and imperial favour and imperial displeasure interfered during many generations with the integrity of the Duchy of Brunswick, and the Electorate of Hanover was made up for the most part out of territories which Brunswick had once owned. The Emperor Leopold constructed it formally into an Electorate in 1692, with Ernest Augustus of Brunswick-Lüneberg as its first Elector. The George Louis, who now in 1714 ~~son~~ is waiting to become King of England, was the son of Ernest Augustus and of Sophia, youngest daughter of Elizabeth Stuart, Queen of Bohemia, sister to Charles I. of England. Elizabeth had married Frederick, the Elector-Palatine of the Rhine, and her life was crossed and thwarted by the opening of the Thirty Years' War, and then by the misfortunes of her brother Charles and his dynasty. Elizabeth survived the English troubles and saw the Restoration, and came to live in England, and to see her nephew, Charles the Second, reign as king. She barely saw this. Two years after the Restoration she died in London. Sophia was her twelfth child; she had thirteen in all. One of Sophia's elder brothers was Prince Rupert, that 'Rupert of the Rhine,' of whom Macaulay's ballad says that, 'Rupert never comes but to conquer or to die,' the Rupert whose daring and irresistible charges generally won his half of the battle, only that the other half might be lost and that his success might be swallowed up in the ruin of his companions. His headlong bravery was

Digitized by Google

a misfortune rather than an advantage to his cause, and there seems to have been one instance, that of the surrender of Bristol, in which that bravery deserted him for the moment. We see him afterwards in the pages of Pepys, an uninteresting, prosaic, pedantic figure, usefully employed in scientific experiments, and with all the gilt washed off him by time and years and the commonplace wear and tear of routine life.

George inherited none of the accomplishments of his mother. His father was a man of some talent and force of character, but he cared nothing for books or education of any kind, and George was allowed to revel in ignorance. He had no particular merit except a certain easy good nature, which rendered him unwilling to do harm or to give pain to anyone, unless some interest of his own should make it convenient. His neglected and unrestrained youth was abandoned to licence and to profligacy. He was married in the twenty-second year of his age against his own inclination to the Princess Sophia Dorothea of Zell, who was some six years younger. The marriage was merely a political one, formed with the object of uniting the whole of the Duchy of Lüneberg. George was attached to another girl; the Princess is supposed to have fixed her affections upon another man. They were married, however, on November 21, 1682, and during all her life Sophia Dorothea had to put up with the neglect, the contempt, and afterwards the cruelty of her husband. George's strongest taste was for ugly women. One

Digitized by Google

of his favourites, Mademoiselle Schulemberg, Maid of Honour to his mother, and who was afterwards made Duchess of Kendal, was conspicuous, even in the unlovely Hanoverian court, for the awkwardness of her long, gaunt, fleshless figure. Another favourite of George's, Madame Kilmansegge, afterwards made Countess of Darlington, represented a different style of beauty. She is described by Horace Walpole as having 'large fierce black eyes rolling beneath lofty arched eyebrows, two acres of cheeks spread with crimson, an ocean of neck that overflowed and was not distinguishable from the lower part of her body, and no portion of which was restrained by stays.'

It would not be surprising if the neglected Sophia Dorothea should have looked for love elsewhere, or at least should not have been strict enough in repelling it when it offered itself. Philip Christof Königsmark, a Swedish soldier of fortune, was supposed to be her favoured lover. He suffered for his amour; and it was said that his death came by the special order —one version has it by the very hand—of George the Elector, the owner of the ladies Schulemberg and Kilmansegge. Sophia Dorothea was banished for the rest of her life to the Castle of Ahlden on the river Aller. In the old schloss of Hanover the spot is still shown, outside the door of the Hall of Knights, which tradition has fixed upon as the spot where the assassination of Königsmark took place.

The Königsmarks were in their way a famous family. The elder brother was the Charles John Königsmark celebrated in an English State trial as

Digitized by Google

the man who planned and helped to carry out the murder of Thomas Thynne. Thomas Thynne, of Longleat, the accused of Titus Oates, the 'Wise Issachar,' the 'wealthy Western friend' of Dryden, the comrade of Monmouth, the 'Tom of Ten Thousand' of everyone, was betrothed to Elizabeth, the child-widow—she was only fifteen years old—of Lord Ogle. Königsmark, fresh from love-making in all the courts of Europe, and from fighting anything and everything from the Turk at Tangiers to the wild bulls of Madrid, seems to have fallen in love with Thynne's betrothed wife, and to have thought that the best way of obtaining her was to murder his rival. The murder was done, and its story is recorded in clumsy bas-relief over Thynne's tomb in Westminster Abbey. Königsmark's accomplices were executed, but Königsmark got off and died years later, fighting for the Venetians at the siege of classic Argos. The soldier in Virgil falls on a foreign field, and dying remembers sweet Argos. The elder Königsmark dying before sweet Argos, ought of right to remember that spot where St. Albans Street joins Pall Mall, and where Thynne was done to death. The Königsmarks had a sister, the beautiful Aurora, who was mistress of Frederick Augustus, Elector of Saxony, and so mother of the famous Maurice de Saxe, and ancestress of George Sand. Later, like the fair sinner of some tale of chivalry, she ended her days in pious retirement as prioress of the Protestant Abbey at Quedlinburg.

George was born in Osnabrück in May, 1660,

Digitized by Google

and was therefore now in his fifty-fifth year. As his first qualification for the government of England, it may be mentioned that he did not understand one sentence of the English language, was ignorant of English ways, history and traditions, and had as little sympathy with the growing sentiments of the majority of educated English people as if he had been an Amurath succeeding an Amurath.

When George became Elector on the death of his father in 1698, he showed, however, some capacity for improvement, under the influence of the new responsibility imposed upon him by his station. His private life did not amend, but his public conduct acquired a certain solidity and consistency which was not to have been expected from his previous mode of living. One of his merits was not likely to be by any means a merit in the eyes of the English people. He was, to do him justice, deeply attached to his native country. He had all the love for Hanover that the cat has for the hearth to which it is accustomed. The ways of the place suited him; the climate, the soil, the whole conditions of life were exactly what he would have them to be. He lived up to the age of fifty-four a contented, stolid, happy, dissolute Elector of Hanover; and it was a complete disturbance to all his habits and his predilections when the expected death of Anne compelled him to turn his thoughts to England.

The other claimant of the English crown was James Frederick Edward Stuart, the Old Pretender, as he came to be afterwards called by his enemies,

Digitized by Google

the Chevalier de Saint George, as his friends called him, when they did not think it prudent to give him the title of king. James was the step-brother of Queen Anne. He was the son of James the Second, by James's second wife, Maria D'Este, sister to Francis, Duke of Modena. Maria was only the age of Juliet when she married ; she had just passed her fourteenth year. Unlike Juliet she was not beautiful ; unlike Juliet she was poor. She was, however, a devout Roman Catholic, and therefore was especially acceptable to her husband. She had four children in quick succession, all of whom died in infancy ; and then for ten years she had no child. The *London Gazette* surprised the world one day by the announcement that the Queen had become pregnant, and upon June 10, 1688, she gave birth to a son. It need hardly be told now that the wildest commotion was raised by the birth of the prince. The great majority of the Protestants insinuated, or stoutly declared, that the alleged heir-apparent was not a child of the Queen. The story was that a newly-born child, the son of a poor miller, had been brought into the Queen's room in a warming-pan, and passed off as the son of the Queen. It was said that Father Petre, a Catholic clergyman, had been instrumental in carrying out this contrivance ; and therefore the enemies of the royal family talked of the young prince as Perkin or Petrelin. The warming-pan was one of the most familiar objects in satirical literature and art for many generations after. A whole school of caricature was heated into life, if

Digitized by Google

we may use such an expression, by this fabulous warming-pan. Warming-pans were associated with brass money and wooden shoes in the mouths and minds of Whig partisans down to a day not very far remote from our own. Mr. Jobson, the vulgar lawyer in Scott's 'Rob Roy,' talks rudely to Diana Vernon, a Catholic, about 'King William, of glorious and immortal memory, our immortal deliverer from Papists and pretenders, and wooden shoes, and warming-pans.' 'Sad things those wooden shoes and warming-pans,' retorted the young lady, who seemed to take pleasure in augmenting his wrath; 'and it is a comfort you don't seem to want a warming-pan at present, Mr. Jobson.' There was not, of course, the slightest foundation for the absurd story about the spurious heir to the throne. Some little excuse was given for the spread of such a tale by the mere fact that there had been delay in summoning the proper officials to be present at the birth. But despite all the pains Bishop Burnet takes to make the report seem trustworthy, it may be doubted whether any one whose opinion was worth having seriously believed in the story, even at the time, and it soon ceased to have any believers at all. At the time, however, it was accepted as an article of faith by a large proportion of the outer public; and the supposed Jesuit plot and the supposed warming-pan served as missiles with which to pelt the supporters of the Stuarts, until long after there had ceased to be the slightest chance whatever of a Stuart restoration. This story of a spurious heir to a throne repeats

Digitized by Google

itself at various intervals of history. The child of Napoleon the First and Maria Louisa was believed by many Legitimist partisans to be supposititious. In our own days there were many intelligent persons in France firmly convinced that the unfortunate Prince Louis Napoleon, who was killed in Zululand, was not the son of the Empress of the French, but that he was the son of her sister, the Duchess of Alva, and that he was merely palmed off on the French people in order to secure the stability of the Bonapartist throne.

James Stuart was born, as we have said, on June 10, 1688, and was therefore still in his twenty-sixth year at the time when this history begins. Soon after his birth his mother hurried with him to France to escape the coming troubles, and his father presently followed discrowned. He had led an unhappy life, unhappy all the more because of the incessant dissipation with which he tried to enliven it. He is described as tall, meagre, and melancholy. Although not strikingly like Charles the First or Charles the Second, he had unmistakably the Stuart aspect. Horace Walpole said of him many years after that, 'without the particular features of any Stuart, the Chevalier has the strong lines and fatality of air peculiar to them all.' The words 'fatality of air' describe very expressively that look of melancholy which all the Stuart features wore when in repose. The melancholy look represented an underlying habitual mood of melancholy or even despondency, which a close observer may read in the character of.

Digitized by Google

the 'merry monarch' himself, for all his mirth and his dissipation, just as well as in that of Charles the First or of James the Second. The profligacy of Charles the Second had little that was joyous in it. James Stuart, the Chevalier, had not the abilities and the culture of Charles the Second, and he had much the same taste for intrigue and dissipation. His amours were already beginning to be a scandal, and he drank now and then like a man determined at all cost to drown thought. He was always the slave of women. Women knew all his secrets, and were made acquainted with his projected political enterprises. Sometimes the fair favourite to whom he had unbosomed himself blabbed and tattled all over Versailles or Paris of what she had heard; and in some instances, perhaps, she even took her newly-acquired knowledge to the English Ambassador and disposed of it for a consideration. At this time James Stuart is not yet married; but marriage made as little difference in his way of living as it had done in that of his elderly political rival, George the Elector. It is strange that James Stuart should have made so faint an impression upon history and upon literature. Romance and poetry, which have done so much for his son 'Bonnie Prince Charlie,' have taken hardly any account of him. He figures in Thackeray's 'Esmond,' but the picture is not made very distinct, even by that master of portraiture; and the merely frivolous side of his character is presented with disproportionate prominence. James Stuart had stronger qualities for good or evil than Thackeray seems to

Digitized by Google

have found in him. Some of his contemporaries denied him the credit of man's ordinary courage; he has even been accused of positive cowardice. But there does not seem to be the slightest ground for such an accusation. Studied with the severest eye, his various enterprises, and the manner in which he bore himself throughout them, would seem to prove that he had courage enough for any undertaking. Princes seldom show any want of physical courage. They are trained from their very birth to regard themselves as always on parade, and even if they should feel their hearts give way in presence of danger, they are not likely to allow it to be seen. It was not lack of personal bravery that marred the chances of James Stuart.

It is only doing bare justice to one whose character and career have met with little favour from history, contemporary or recent, to say that James might have made his way to the throne with comparative ease if he would only consent to change his religion and become a Protestant. It was again and again pressed upon him by English adherents, and even by statesmen in power, by Oxford and by Bolingbroke, that if he could not actually become a Protestant he should at least pretend to become one, and give up all outward show of his devotion to the Catholic Church. James steadily and decisively refused to be guilty of any meanness so ignoble and detestable. His conduct in thus adhering to his convictions, even at the cost of a throne, has been contrasted with that of Henry the Fourth, who declared

Digitized by Google

Paris to be 'well worth a mass.' But some injustice has been done to Henry the Fourth in regard to his conversion. Henry's great Protestant minister, Sully, urged him to become an open and professing Catholic on the ground that he had always been a Catholic more or less consciously, and in his heart. Sully gave Henry several evidences, drawn from his observation of Henry's own demeanour, to prove to him that his natural inclinations and the turn of his intellect always led him towards the Catholic faith, commenting shrewdly on the fact that he had seen Henry cross himself more than once on the field of battle in the presence of danger. Thus, according to Sully, Henry the Fourth in professing himself a Catholic would be only following the bent of his own natural inclinations. However that may be, it is still the fact that Henry the Fourth, by changing his profession of religion, succeeded in obtaining a crown, and that James the Pretender, by refusing to hear of such a change, lost his best chance of a throne.

What were Anne's own inclinations with regard to the succession? There cannot be much doubt as to the way her personal feelings went. There is a history of the reign of Queen Anne written by Dr. Thomas Somerville, 'one of His Majesty's Chaplains in Ordinary,' and published in 1798, with a dedication 'by permission' to the King. It is called on its title-page, 'The History of Great Britain during the Reign of Queen Anne, with a Dissertation concerning the Danger of the Protestant Succession.' Such

Digitized by Google

an author, writing comparatively soon after the events, and in a book dedicated to the reigning king, was not likely to do any conscious injustice to the memory of Queen Anne, and was especially likely to take a fair view of the influence which her personal inclinations were calculated to have on the succession. Dr. Somerville declares with great justice that 'mildness, timidity, and anxiety were constitutional ingredients in the temper' of Queen Anne. This very timidity, this very anxiety, appears, according to Dr. Somerville's judgment, to have worked favourably for the Hanoverian succession. The Queen herself by sentiment, and by what may be called a sort of superstition, leaned much towards the Stuarts. 'The loss,' says Dr. Somerville, 'of all her children bore the aspect of an angry Providence, adjusting punishment to the nature and quality of her offence.' Her offence, of course, was the part she had taken in helping to dethrone her father. 'Wounded in spirit, and prone to superstition, she naturally thought of the restitution of the crown to her brother as the only atonement she could make to the memory of her injured father.' This feeling might have ripened into action with her but for that constitutional timidity and anxiety of which Somerville speaks. There would undoubtedly have been dangers, obvious to even the bravest or the most reckless, in an attempt just then to alter the succession, but Anne saw those dangers 'in the most terrific form and recoiled with horror from the sight.' Moreover, she had a constitutional objection, as strong as that of Queen Elizabeth

Digitized by Google

herself, to the presence of an intended successor near her throne. 'She trembled,' says Somerville, 'at the idea of the presence of a successor, whoever he might be; and the residence of her own brother in England was not less dreadful to her than that of the Electoral Prince.' But it is probable that had she lived longer she would have found herself constrained to put up with the presence either of one claimant or the other. Her ministers, whoever they might be, would surely have seen the imperative necessity of bringing over to England the man whom the Queen and they had determined to present to the English people as the destined heir of the throne. In such an event as that, and most assuredly if men like Bolingbroke had been in power, it may be taken for granted that the Queen would have preferred her own brother, a Stuart, to the Electoral Prince of Hanover. 'What the consequence might have been, if the Queen had survived,' says Somerville, 'is merely a matter of conjecture; but we may pronounce, with some degree of assurance, that the Protestant interest would have been exposed to more certain and to more imminent dangers than ever had threatened it before at any period since the Revolution.' This seems a reasonable and just assertion. If Anne had lived much longer, it is possible that England might have seen a James the Third.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER II.

PARTIES AND LEADERS.

ALL the closing months of Queen Anne's reign were occupied by Whigs and Tories, and indeed by Anne herself as well, in the invention and conduct of intrigues about the succession. The Queen herself, with the grave opening before her, kept her fading eyes turned, not to the world she was about to enter, but to the world she was about to leave. She was thinking much more about the future of her throne than about her own soul and future state. The Whigs were quite ready to maintain the Hanoverian succession by force. They did not expect to be able to carry matters easily, and they were ready to encounter a civil war. Their belief seems to have been that they, and not their opponents, would have to strike the blow, and they had already summoned the Duke of Marlborough from his retirement in Flanders to take the lead in their movement. Having Marlborough they knew that they would have the army. On the other hand, if Bolingbroke and the Tories really had any actual hope of a restoration of the Stuarts, it is certain that up to the last moment they had made no substantial preparations to accomplish their object.

Digitized by Google

The Whigs and Tories divided between them whatever political force there was in English society at this time. Outside both parties lay a considerable section of people who did not distinctly belong to the one faction or the other, but were ready to incline now to this and now to that, according as the conditions of the hour might inspire them. Outside these again, and far outnumbering these and all others combined, was the great mass of the English people —hard-working, much-suffering, poor, patient, and almost absolutely indifferent to changes in Governments and the humours and struggles of parties. 'These wrangling jars of Whig and Tory,' says Dean Swift, 'are stale and old as Troy-town story.' But if the principles were old the titles of the parties were new. Steele, in 1710, published in the 'Tatler' a letter from Pasquin of Rome to Isaac Bickerstaff, asking for 'an account of those two religious orders which have lately sprung up amongst you, the Whigs and the Tories.' Steele declared that you could not come even among women 'but you find them divided into Whig and Tory.' It was like the famous lawsuit in Abdera, alluded to by Lucian, and amplified by Wieland, concerning the ownership of the ass's shadow, on which all the Abderites took sides, and every one was either a 'Shadow' or an 'Ass.'

Various explanations have been given of these titles Whig and Tory. Titus Oates applied the term 'Tory,' which then signified an Irish robber, to those who would not believe in his Popish plot, and the name gradually became extended to all who were

Digitized by Google

supposed to have sympathy with the Catholic Duke of York. The word 'Whig' first arose during the Cameronian rising, when it was applied to the Scotch Presbyterians, and is derived by some from the whey which they habitually drank, and by others from a word 'whiggam,' used by the Western Scottish drovers.

The Whigs and the Tories represent in the main not only two political doctrines, but two different feelings in the human mind. The natural tendency of some men is to regard political liberty as of more importance than political authority, and of other men to think that the maintenance of authority is the first object to be secured, and that only so much of individual liberty is to be conceded as will not interfere with authority's strictest exercise. Roughly speaking, therefore, the Tories were for authority, and the Whigs for liberty. The Tories naturally held to the principle of the monarchy and of the State Church; the Whigs were inclined for the supremacy of Parliament, and for something like an approach to religious equality. Up to this time at least the Tory party still accepted the theory of the Divine origin of the King's supremacy. The Whigs were even then the advocates of a constitutional system, and held that the people at large are the source of monarchical power. To the one set of men the sovereign was a divinely appointed ruler; to the other, he was the hereditary chief of the realm, having the source of his authority in popular election. The Tories as the Church party disliked the Dissenters even more than they disliked the Roman Catholics. The Whigs

Digitized by Google

were then even inclined to regard the Church as a branch of the Civil Service, to adopt a much more modern phrase, and they were in favour of extending freedom of worship to Dissenters, and in a certain sense to Roman Catholics. According to Bishop Burnet, it was in the reign of Queen Anne that the distinction between High Church and Low Church first marked itself out, and we find almost as a natural necessity that the High Church men were Tories, and the Low Church men were Whigs. Then as now the chief strength of the Tories was found in the country, and not in the large towns. So far as town populations were concerned, the Tories were proportionately strongest where the borough was smallest. The great bulk of the agricultural population, so far as it had definite political feelings, was distinctly Tory. The strength of the Whigs lay in the manufacturing towns and the great ports. London was at that time much stronger in its Liberal political sentiments than it has been more recently. The moneyed interest, the bankers, the merchants, were attached to the Whig party. Many peers and bishops were Whigs, but they were chiefly the peers and bishops who owed their appointments to William the Third. The French envoy, D'Iberville, at this time describes the Whigs as having at their command the best purses, the best swords, the ablest heads, and the handsomest women. The Tory party was strong at the University of Oxford; the Whig party was in greater force at Cambridge. Both Whigs and Tories, however, were

Digitized by Google

in a somewhat subdued condition of mind about the time that Anne's reign was closing. Neither party as a whole was inclined to push its political principles to anything like a logical extreme. Whigs and Tories alike were practically satisfied with the form which the English governing system had put on after the Revolution of 1688. Neither party was inclined for another revolution. The civil war had carried the Whig principle a little too far for the Whigs. The Restoration had brought a certain amount of scandal on sovereign authority and the principle of Divine right. The minds of men were settling down into willingness for a compromise. There were of course amongst the Tories the extreme party so pledged to the restoration of the Stuarts that they would have moved heaven and earth, at all events they would have convulsed England, for the sake of bringing them back. These men constituted what would now be called in the language of French politics the Extreme Right of the Tory party; they would become of importance at any hour when some actual movement was made from the outside to restore the Stuarts. Such a movement would of course have carried with it and with them the great bulk of the now quiescent Tory party, but in the meantime, and until some such movement was made, the Jacobite section of the Tories was not in a condition to be active or influential, and was not a serious difficulty in the way of the Hanoverian succession.

The Whigs had great advantages on their side. They had a clear principle to start with. The consti-

Digitized by Google

tutional errors and excesses of the Stuarts had forced on the mind of England a recognition of the two or three main principles of civil and religious liberty. The Whigs knew what they wanted better than the Tories did, and the ends which the Whigs proposed to gain were attainable, while those which the Tories set out for themselves were to a great extent lost in dreamland. The uncertainty and vagueness of many of the Tory aims made some of the Tories themselves only half earnest in their purposes. Many a Tory who talked as loudly as his brothers about the King having his own again, and who toasted 'the King over the water' as freely as they, had in the bottom of his heart very little real anxiety to see a rebellion end in a Stuart restoration. But, on the other hand, the Whigs could strive with all their might and main to carry out their principles in Church and in State without the responsibility of plunging the country into rebellion, and without any dread of seeing their projects melt away into visions and chimeras. A great band of landed proprietors formed the leaders of the Whigs. Times have changed since then, and the representatives of some of those great houses which then led the Whig party have passed or glided insensibly into the ranks of the Tories; but the main reason for this is because a Tory of our day represents fairly enough, in certain political aspects, the Whig of the days of Queen Anne. What is called in American politics a new departure has taken place in England since that time; the Radical party has come into existence with

Digitized by Google

political principles and watchwords quite different even from those of the early Whigs. Some of the Whig houses, not many, have gone with the forward movement; some have remained behind, and so lapsed almost insensibly into the Tory quarter. But at the close of Queen Anne's reign all the great leading Whigs stood well together. They understood better than the Tories did the necessity of obtaining superior influence in the House of Commons. They even contrived at that time to secure the majority of the county constituencies, while they had naturally the majority of the commercial class on their side. Then, as in later days, the vast wealth of the Whig families was spent unstintingly, and it may be said unblushingly, in securing the possession of the small constituencies, the constituencies which were only to be had by liberal bribery. Then, as afterwards, there was perceptible in the Whig party a strange combination of dignity and of meanness, of great principles and of somewhat degraded practices. They had high purposes; they recognised noble principles, and they held to them; they were for political liberty as they then understood it, and they were for religious equality, for such approach at least to religious equality as had then come to be sanctioned by responsible politicians in England. They were ready to make great sacrifices in the defence of their political creed. But the principles and purposes with which they started, and to which they kept, did not succeed in purifying and ennobling all their parliamentary strategy and political conduct. They in-

Digitized by Google

trigued, they bribed, they bought, they cajoled, they paltered, they threatened, they made unsparing use of money and of power, they employed every art to carry out high and national purposes which the most unscrupulous cabal could have used to secure the attainment of selfish and ignoble ends. Their enemies had put one great advantage into their hands. The conduct of Bolingbroke and of Oxford during recent years had left the Whigs the sole representatives of constitutional liberty.

The two great political parties hated and denounced each other with a ferocity hardly known before, and hardly possible in our later times. The Whigs vituperated the Tories as rebels and traitors; the Tories cried out against the Whigs as the enemies of religion and the opponents of 'the true Church of England.' Many a ballad of that time described the Whigs as men whose object it was to destroy both mitre and crown, to introduce anarchy once again, as they had done in the days of Oliver Cromwell. The Whig balladists retorted by describing the Tories as men who were engaged in trying to bring in 'Perkin' from France, and prophesied the halter as a reward of their leading statesmen. In truth, the bitterness of that hour was very earnest; most of the men on both sides meant what they said. Either side, if it had been in complete preponderance, would probably have had very little scruple in disposing of its leading enemies by means of the halter or the prison. It was for the time not so much a struggle of political parties as a struggle of hostile armies.

Digitized by Google

The men were serious and savage because the crisis was serious and portentous. The chances of an hour might make a man a prime minister or a prisoner. Bolingbroke soon after was in exile, and Walpole at the head of the administration. The slightest chance, the merest accident, might have sent Walpole into exile, and put Bolingbroke at the head of the state.

The eyes of the English public were at this moment turned in especial to watch the movements of two men—the Duke of Marlborough and Lord Bolingbroke. Marlborough was beyond question the greatest soldier of his time. He had gone into exile when Queen Anne consented to degrade him and to persecute him, and now he was on his way home at the urgent entreaty of the Whig leaders, in order to lend his powerful influence to the Hanoverian cause.

The character of the Duke of Marlborough is one which ought to be especially attractive to the authors of romance and the lovers of strong bold portrait painting. One peculiar difficulty, however, a romancist would have in dealing with Marlborough—he could hardly venture to paint Marlborough as nature and fortune made him. The romancist would find himself compelled to soften and to modify many of the distinctive traits of Marlborough's character, in order that he might not seem the mere inventor of a human paradox, in order that he might not appear to be indulging in the fantastic and the impossible. Pope has called Bacon 'the wisest, brightest, meanest of mankind,' but Bacon was not greater in his own path than Marlborough in his, and Bacon's worst

Digitized by Google

meannesses were nobility itself compared with some of Marlborough's political offences. Marlborough started in life with almost every advantage that man could have—with genius, with boundless courage, with personal beauty, with favouring friends. From his early youth he had been attached to James the Second and James the Second's court. One of Marlborough's biographers even suggests that the Duchess of York, James's first wife, was needlessly fond of young Churchill. The beautiful Duchess of Cleveland, she of whom Pepys said 'that everything she did became her,' was passionately in love with Marlborough, and, according to some writers, gave him his first start in life when she presented him with five thousand pounds, which Marlborough, prudent then as ever, invested in an annuity of five hundred a year. Burnet said of him that 'he knew the arts of living in a Court beyond any man in it; he caressed all people with a soft and obliging deportment, and was always ready to do good offices.' His only personal defect was in his voice, which was shrill and disagreeable. He was through all his life avaricious to the last degree; he grasped at money wherever he could get it; he took money from women as well as from men. A familiar story of the time represents another nobleman as having been mistaken for the Duke of Marlborough by a mob at a time when Marlborough was unpopular, and extricating himself from the difficulty by telling the crowd he could not possibly be the Duke of Marlborough, first, because he had only two guineas in his pocket,

Digitized by Google

and next, because he was perfectly ready to give them away. Marlborough had received the highest favours from James the Second, but he quitted James in the hour of his misfortunes, only, however, it should be said, to return secretly to his service at a time when he was professing devotion to William the Third. He betrayed each side to the other. In the same year, and almost in the same month, he writes to the Elector at Hanover and to the Pretender in France, pouring forth to each alike his protestations of devotion. 'I shall be always ready to hazard my fortune and my life for your service,' he tells the Elector. 'I had rather have my hands cut off than do anything prejudicial to King James's cause,' he tells an agent of the Stuarts. James appears to have believed in Marlborough, and William, while he made use of him, to have had no faith in him. 'The Duke of Marlborough,' William said, 'has the best talents for a general of any man in England; but he is a vile man and I hate him, for though I can profit by treasons I cannot bear the traitor.' William's saying was strikingly like that one ascribed to Philip of Macedon. Schomberg spoke of Marlborough as 'the first lieutenant-general whom I ever remember to have deserted his colours.' Lord Granard, who was in the camp of King James the Second on Salisbury Plain, told Dr. King, who has recorded the story, that Churchill and some other colonels invited Lord Granard to supper, and opened to him their design of deserting to the Prince of Orange. Granard not merely refused to enter into the conspiracy, but went to the king and

Digitized by Google

told him the whole story, advising him to seize Marlborough and the other conspirators. Perhaps if this advice had been followed, King William would never have come to the throne of England. James, however, gave no credit to the story, and took no trouble about it. Next morning he found his mistake; but it was then too late. The truth of this story is corroborated by other authorities, one of them being King James himself, who afterwards stated that he had received information of Lord Churchill's designs, and was recommended to seize his person, but that he unfortunately neglected to avail himself of the advice. 'Speak of that no more,' says Egmont, in Goethe's play: 'I *was* warned.'

Swift said of Marlborough that 'he is as covetous as hell, and ambitious as the prince of it.' Marlborough was as ignorant as he was avaricious. Literary taste or instinct he must have had, because he read with so much eagerness the historical plays of Shakespeare, and indeed frankly owned that his only knowledge of English history was taken from their scenes. Even in that time of loose spelling his spelling is remarkably loose. He seems to spell without any particular principle in the matter, seldom rendering the same word a second time by the same combination of letters. He was at one period of his life a libertine of the loosest order, so far as morals were concerned, but of the shrewdest kind as regarded personal gain and advancement. He would have loved any Lady Bellaston who presented herself, and who could have rewarded him for his kindness. He

Digitized by Google

was not of the type of Byron's 'Don Juan,' who declares that

> The prisoned eagle will not pair, nor I
> Serve a Sultana's sensual phantasy.

Marlborough would have served any phantasy for gain. It has been said of him that the reason for his being so successful with women as a young man was that he took money of them. Yet, as another striking instance of the paradoxical nature of his character, he was intensely devoted to his wife. He was the true lover of Sarah Jennings, who afterwards became Duchess of Marlborough. A man of the most undaunted courage in the presence of the enemy, he was his wife's obedient, patient, timid slave. He lived more absolutely under her control than Belisarius under the government of his unscrupulous helpmate. Sarah Jennings was, in her way, almost as remarkable as her husband. She was a woman of great beauty. Colley Cibber in his 'Apology' pays devoted testimony to her charms. He had by chance to attend on her in the capacity of a sort of amateur lackey at an entertainment in Nottingham, and he seems to have been completely dazzled by her loveliness. 'If so clear an emanation of beauty, such a commanding grace of aspect, struck me into a regard that had something softer than the most profound respect in it, I cannot see why I may not without offence remember it, since beauty, like the sun, must sometimes lose its power to choose, and shine into equal warmth the peasant and the courtier.' He quaintly adds, 'However presumptuous or impertinent these thoughts may

Digitized by Google

have appeared at my first entertaining them, why may I not hope that my having kept them decently a secret for full fifty years may be now a good round plea for their pardon?' The imperious spirit which could rule Churchill long dominated the feeble nature of Queen Anne. But when once this domination was overthrown Sarah Jennings had no art to curb her temper into such show of respect and compliance as might have won back her lost honours. She met her humiliation with the most childish bursts of passion; she did everything in her power to annoy and insult the Queen who had passed from her haughty control. She was always a keen hater; to the last day of her life she never forgot her resentment towards all who had, or who she thought had, injured her. In long later years she got into unseemly lawsuits with her own near relations. But if one side of her character was harsh and unlovely enough, it may be admitted that there was something not unheroic about her unyielding spirit—something noble in the respect to her husband's memory, which showed itself in the declaration that she would not marry 'the emperor of the world,' after having been the wife of John Duke of Marlborough.

Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke, was in his way as great a man as the Duke of Marlborough. At the time we are now describing he seemed to have passed through a long, a varied, and a brilliant career, and yet he had only arrived at the age when public men in England now begin to be regarded as responsible politicians. He was in his thirty-sixth year.

Digitized by Google

The career that had prematurely begun was drawing to its premature close. He had climbed to his highest position; he is Prime Minister of England, and has managed to get rid of his old colleague and rival, Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford. Bolingbroke had almost every gift and grace that nature and fortune could give. Three years before this Swift wrote to Stella, 'I think Mr. St. John the greatest young man I ever knew: wit, capacity, beauty, quickness of apprehension, good learning and an excellent taste; the greatest orator in the House of Commons, admirable conversation, good nature and good manners, generous, and a despiser of money.' Yet, as in the fairy story, the benign powers which had combined to endow him so richly had withheld the one gift which might have made all the rest of surpassing value, and which being denied left them of little account. If Bolingbroke had had principle he would have been one of the greatest Englishmen of any time. His utter want of morality in politics, as well as in private life, proved fatal to him; he only climbed high in order to fall the lower. He was remarkable for profligacy even in that heedless and profligate time. Voltaire, in one of his letters, tells a story of a famous London courtesan who exclaimed to some of her companion nymphs on hearing that Bolingbroke had been made Secretary of State, 'Seven thousand guineas a year, girls, and all for us!' Even if the story be not true it is interesting and significant as an evidence of the sort of impression which Bolingbroke had made upon his age. It was his glory to be vicious; he was proud of his orgies. He liked to be known as a man who

Digitized by Google

could spend the whole night in a drunken revel, and the afternoon in preparing some despatch on which the fortunes of his country or the peace of the world might depend. The sight of a beautiful woman could turn him away for the time from the gravest political purposes. He was ready at such a moment to throw anything over for the sake of the sudden love-chase which had come in his way. He bragged of his amours, and boasted that he had never failed of success with any woman who seemed to him worth pursuing. Like Faust, he loved to reel from desire to enjoyment, and from enjoyment back again into desire. Bolingbroke was the first of a great line of parliamentary debaters who have made for themselves a distinct place in English history, and whose rivals are not to be found in the history of any other parliament. It is difficult at this time to form any adequate idea of Bolingbroke's style as a speaker or his capacity for debate when compared with other great English parliamentary orators. But so far as one may judge, we should be inclined to think that he must have had Fox's readiness without Fox's redundancy and repetition; and that he must have had the stately diction and the commanding style of the younger Pitt, with a certain freshness and force which the younger Pitt did not always exhibit. Bolingbroke's English prose style is hardly surpassed by that of any other author, either before his time or since. It is supple, strong, and luminous; not redundant, but not bare; ornamented where ornament is suitable and even useful, but nowhere decorated with the purple rags of un-

Digitized by Google

necessary and artificial brilliancy. Such a man, so gifted, must in any case have held a high place among his contemporaries, and probably if Bolingbroke had possessed the political and personal virtues of men like Burke and Pitt, or even the political virtues of a man like Charles Fox, he would have been remembered as the greatest of all English Parliamentary statesmen. But, as we have already said, the one defect filled him with faults. The lack of principle gave him a lack of purpose, and wanting purpose he persevered in no consistent political path. Swift has observed that Bolingbroke 'had a great respect for the characters of Alcibiades and Petronius, especially the latter, whom he would gladly be thought to resemble.' He came nearer at his worst to Petronius than at his best to Alcibiades. Alcibiades, to do him justice, admired and understood virtue in others, however small the share of it he contrived to keep for himself. It is impossible to read that wonderful compound of dramatic humour and philosophic thought, Plato's 'Banquet,' without being moved by the generous and impassioned eulogy which Alcibiades, in the fulness of his heart and of his wine, pours out upon the austere virtue of Socrates. Such as Alcibiades is there described we may suppose Alcibiades to have been, and no one who has followed the career of Bolingbroke can believe it possible that he ever could have felt any sincere admiration for virtue in man or woman, or could have thought of it otherwise than as a thing to be sneered at and despised. The literary men, and more especially the poets of the

Digitized by Google

days of Bolingbroke, seem to have had as little scruple in their compliments as a French *petit-maître* might have in sounding the praises of his mistress to his mistress's ears. Pope talks of his villa where, 'nobly pensive, St. John sat and thought,' and declared that such only might

> Tread this sacred floor,
> Who dare to love their country and be poor.

It is hard to think of Bolingbroke, even in his more advanced years, as 'nobly pensive,' sitting and thinking, and certainly neither Bolingbroke nor any of Bolingbroke's closer political associates was exactly the sort of man who would have dared 'to love his country and be poor.' In Bolingbroke's latest years we hear of him as amusing himself by boasting to his second wife of his various successful amours, until at last the lady, weary of the repetition, somewhat contemptuously reminds him that, however happy as a lover he may have been once, his days of love were now over, and the less he said about it the better.

Nor was Pope less extravagant in his praise to Harley than to St. John. He says :—

> If aught below the seats divine
> Can touch immortals, 'tis a soul like thine,
> A soul supreme, in each hard instance tried,
> Above all pain, all passion, and all pride,
> The rage of power, the blast of public breath,
> The lust of lucre, and the dread of death.

These lines, it is right to remember, were addressed to Harley not in his power, but after his fall. Even with that excuse for a friend's overcharged eulogy, they read like a satire on Harley rather than like his panegyric. Caricature itself could not more broadly

Digitized by Google

distort the features of a human being than his poetic admirer has altered the lineaments of Oxford. Harley had been intriguing on both sides of the field. He professed devoted loyalty to the Queen and to her appointed successor, and he was at the same time coquetting, to put it mildly, with the Stuart family in France. Nothing surprises a reader more than the universal duplicity that seems to have prevailed in the days of Anne and of the early Georges. Falsehood appears to have been a recognised diplomatic and political art. Statesmen, even of the highest rank and reputation, made no concealment of the fact that whenever occasion required they were ready to state the thing which was not, either in private conversation or in public debate. Nothing could exceed or excuse the boundless duplicity of Marlborough, but it must be owned that even William the Third told almost as many falsehoods to Marlborough as Marlborough could have told to him. At a time when William detested Marlborough, he yet occasionally paid him in public and in private the very highest compliments on his integrity and his virtue. Men were not then supposed or expected to speak the truth. A statesman might deceive a foreign minister or the Parliament of his own country with as little risk to his reputation as a lady would have undergone in later days who told a lie to the Custom House officer at the frontier to save the piece of smuggled lace in her trunk.

If a man like William of Nassau could stoop to deceit and falsehood for any political purpose, it is

Digitized by Google

easy to understand that a man like Harley would make free use of the same arts, and for personal objects as well. Harley's political changes were so many and so rapid that they could not possibly be explained by any theory consistent with sincerity. It was well said of him that 'his humour is never to deal clearly or openly, but always with reserve, if not dissimulation, and to love tricks when not necessary, but from an inward satisfaction in applauding his own cunning.' He entered Parliament in 1689, and in 1700 was chosen Speaker of the House of Commons. At that time, and for long after, it was not an uncommon thing that a man who had been Speaker should afterwards become a Secretary of State, sitting in the same House. This was Harley's case: in 1704 he was made principal Secretary of State. In 1708 Harley resigned office, and immediately after took the leadership of the Tory party. In about two years he overthrew the Whig administration, and became the head of a new Government, with the place of Lord High Treasurer, and the title of Earl of Oxford. His craft seems only to have been that low kind of artifice which enables an unscrupulous man to cajole his followers and to stir up division among his enemies. His word was not to be relied upon by friend or enemy, and when he most affected a tone of frankness or of candour he was least to be trusted. As Lord Stanhope well says of him, 'His slender and pliant intellect was well fitted to crawl up to the heights of power through all the crooked mazes and dirty by-paths of intrigue; but having

Digitized by Google

once attained the pinnacle, its smallness and meanness were exposed to all the world.' Even his private life had not the virtues which one who reads some of the exalted panegyrics paid to him by contemporary poets and others would be apt to imagine. He was fond of drink and fond of pleasure in a small and secret way; his vices were as unlike the daring and brilliant profligacy of his colleague and rival Bolingbroke as his intellect was inferior to Bolingbroke's surpassing genius. For all Pope's poetic eulogy, the poet could say in prose of Lord Oxford that he was not a very capable minister, and had a good deal of negligence into the bargain. 'He used to send trifling verses from court to the Scriblerus club every day, and would come and talk idly with them almost every night, even when his all was at stake.' Pope adds that Oxford 'talked of business in so confused a manner that you did not know what he was about, and everything he went to tell you was in the epic way, for he always began in the middle.' Swift calls him 'the greatest procrastinator in the world.' It is of Lord Oxford that the story is originally told which has been told of so many statesmen here and in America since his time. Lord Oxford, according to Pope, invited Rowe, the dramatic poet, to learn Spanish. Rowe went to work, and studied Spanish under the impression that some appointment at the Spanish Court would follow. When he returned to Harley and told him he had accomplished the task, Harley said, 'Then, Mr. Rowe, I envy you the pleasure of reading "Don Quixote" in the original.' Pope asks, 'Is not that

Digitized by Google

cruel?' But others have held that it was unintentional on Lord Oxford's part, and merely one of his unthinking oddities.

Another man, fifteen years younger than Harley, a schoolfellow at Eton of Bolingbroke, was rising slowly, surely, into prominence and power. All the great part of his career is yet to come; but even already, while men were talking of Marlborough and Bolingbroke, they found themselves compelled to give a place in their thoughts to Robert Walpole. If Bolingbroke was the first, and perhaps the most brilliant, of the great line of Parliamentary debaters who have made debate a moving power in English history, Walpole was the first of that line of statesmen who, sprung from the class of the 'Commoner,' have become leaders of the English Parliament. In position and in influence, although not in personal character or accomplishments, Walpole may be described as the direct predecessor of Peel and Gladstone. Just two years before the death of William the Third, Walpole entered Parliament for the first time. He married, entered Parliament, and succeeded to his father's estates in the same year, 1700. Walpole was only twenty-four years of age when he took his seat in the House of Commons as member for Castle Rising in Norfolk. He was a young country squire of considerable fortune, and a thorough supporter of the Whig party. Walpole came into Parliament at that happy time for men of his position when the change was already taking place which marked the representative assembly as the controlling power in the

Digitized by Google

state. The Government as a direct ruling power was beginning to grow less and less effective, and the House of Commons beginning to grow more and more strong. This change had begun to set in during the Restoration, and by the time Walpole came to be known in Parliament it was becoming more and more evident that the Ministers of State were in the future only to be men entrusted with the duty of carrying out the will of the majority in the House of Commons. Before that majority every other power in the State was ultimately to bend. The man, therefore, who could by eloquence, genuine statesmanship, and force of character, or even by mere tact, secure the adhesion of that majority, had become virtually the ruler of the State. But as will easily be seen, his rule even then was something very different indeed from the rule of an arbitrary minister. He would have to satisfy, to convince, to conciliate the majority. A single false step, an hour's weakness of purpose, nay, even a failure for which he was not himself accountable in home or foreign policy, might deprive him of his influence over the majority, and might reduce him to comparative insignificance. Therefore, the controlling power which a great minister acquired was held by virtue of the most constant watchfulness, the most unsparing labour, energy, and devotion, and also in a great measure by the favour of fortune and of opportunity.

Walpole was a man eminently qualified to obtain influence over the House of Commons, and to keep it up when he had once obtained it. No man could

Digitized by Google

have promised less in the beginning. That was an acute observer who divined the genius of Cromwell under Cromwell's homely exterior when he first came up to Parliament. Almost as much acuteness would have been needed to enable anyone to see the future prime minister of England and master of the House of Commons in the plain unpromising form, the homely, almost stolid countenance, the ungainly movements and gestures of Walpole. Walpole was as much of a rustic as Lord Althorp in times nearer to our own acknowledged himself to be. Althorp said he ought to have been a grazier, and that it was an odd chance which made him prime minister. But the difference was great. Walpole had the gifts which make a man prime minister, despite his country gentleman or grazier-like qualities. It was not chance but Walpole himself which raised him to the position he came to hold. Walpole knew nothing and cared nothing about literature and art. His great passion was for hunting; his next love was for wine, and his third for his dinner. Without any natural gift of eloquence he became a great debater. Nature, which seemed to have lavished all her most luxurious gifts on Bolingbroke, appeared to have pinched and starved Walpole. Where Bolingbroke was richest Walpole was poorest. Bolingbroke's genius required a frequent rein; Walpole's intellect needed the perpetual spur. Yet Walpole, with his lack of imagination, of eloquence, of wit, of humour, and of culture, went farther and did more than the brilliant Bolingbroke. It was the old fable of the

Digitized by Google

hare and the tortoise over again ; perhaps it should rather be called a new version of the old fable. The farther the hare goes in the wrong way the more she goes astray, and thus many of Bolingbroke's most rapid movements only helped the tortoise to get to the goal before him. In 1708 Walpole, now recognised as an able debater, a clever tactician, and, above all things, an excellent man of business, was appointed Secretary at War. He became at the same time leader of the House of Commons. He was one of the managers in the unfortunate impeachment of the empty-headed High Church preacher, Dr. Sacheverell. He resigned office with the other Whig ministers in 1710. Harley coming into power offered him a place in the new administration, which Walpole declined to accept. The Tories, reckless and ruthless in their majority, expelled Walpole from the House in 1712 and imprisoned him in the Tower. The charge against him was one of corruption, a charge easily made in those days against any minister, and which, if high moral principles were to prevail, might probably have been as easily sustained as it was made. Walpole, however, was not worse than his contemporaries ; nor, even if he had been, would the contemporaries have been inclined to treat his offences very seriously so long as they were not inspired to act against him by partisan motives. At the end of the session he was released, and now, in the closing days of Anne's reign, all eyes turned to him as a rising man and a certain bulwark of the new dynasty.

It would be impossible not to regard Jonathan

Digitized by Google

Swift as one of the politicians, one of the statesmen, of this age. Swift was a politician in the highest sense, although he had seen little of the one great political arena in which the battles of English parties were fought out. He has left it on record that he never heard either Bolingbroke or Harley speak in Parliament or anywhere in public. He was at this time about forty-seven years of age, and had not yet reached his highest point in politics or in literature. The 'Tale of a Tub' had been written, but not 'Gulliver's Travels;' the tract on 'The Conduct of the Allies,' but not the 'Drapier's Letters.' Even at this time he was a power in political life; his was an influence with which statesmen and even sovereigns had to reckon. No pen ever served a cause better than his had served, and was yet to serve, the interests of the Tory party. He was probably the greatest English pamphleteer at a time when the pamphlet had to do all the work of the leading article and most of the work of the platform. His churchman's gown sat uneasily on him; he was like one of the fighting bishops of the Middle Ages, with whom armour was the more congenial wear. He had a fierce and domineering temper, and indeed out of his strangely bright blue eyes there was already beginning to shine only too ominously the wild light of that *sæva indignatio* which the inscription drawn up by his own hand for his tomb described as lacerating his heart. The ominous light at last broke out into the fire of insanity. We shall meet Swift again; just now we only stop to note him as a political influence. At

Digitized by Google

this time he is Dean of St. Patrick's in Ireland; he has been lately in London trying, and without success, to bring about a reconciliation between Bolingbroke and Harley; and, finding his efforts ineffectual, and seeing that troubled times were near at hand, he has quietly withdrawn to Berkshire. Before leaving London he wrote the letter to Lord Peterborough containing the remarkable words with which we have opened this volume. It is curious that Swift himself afterwards ascribed to Harley the saying about the Queen's health and the heedless behaviour of statesmen. In his 'Enquiry into the Behaviour of the Queen's Last Ministry,' dated June 1715, he tells us that 'about Christmas 1713' 'the treasurer' said to him, 'whenever anything ails the Queen these people are out of their wits; and yet they are so thoughtless that as soon as she is well they act as if she were immortal.' To which Swift adds the following significant comment, 'I had sufficient reason, both before and since, to allow his observation to be true, and that some share of it might with justice be applied to himself.' It was at the house of a clergyman at Upper Letcomb, near Wantage, in Berkshire, that Swift stayed for some time before returning to his Irish home. From Letcomb the reader will perhaps note with some painful interest that Swift wrote to Miss Esther Vanhomrigh, whom all generations will know as Vanessa, a letter, in which he describes his somewhat melancholy mode of life just then, tells her 'this is the first syllable I have wrote to anybody since you saw me,' and adds that 'if this

Digitized by Google

place were ten times worse, nothing shall make me return to town while things are in the situation I left them.'

Swift, in his heart, trusted neither Bolingbroke nor Harley. It seems clear that Lady Masham was under the impression that she had Swift as her accomplice in the intrigue which finally turned Harley out of office. She writes to him while he is at Letcomb a letter which could not have been written if she were not in that full conviction; and he does not reply until the whole week's crisis is past and a new condition of things arisen; and in the reply he commits himself to nothing. If he distrusted Bolingbroke he could not help admiring him. Bolingbroke was the only man then near the court whose genius must not have been rebuked by Swift. But Swift must, for all his lavish praises of Harley, have sometimes secretly despised the hesitating, time-serving statesman, with whom indecision was a substitute for prudence, and to be puzzled was to seem to deliberate. That Harley should have had the playing of a great political game while Swift could only look on, is one of the anomalies of history which Swift's sardonic humour must have appreciated to the full. Swift took his revenge when he could by bullying his great official friends now and then in the roughest fashion. He knew that they feared him, and flattered him because they feared him, and he was glad of it, and hugged himself in the knowledge. He knew even that at one time they were uncertain of his fidelity, and took much pains by their praises and their

Digitized by Google

promises to keep him close at their side; and this, too, amused him. He was amused as a tyrant might be at the obvious efforts of those around him to keep him in good humour, or as a man conscious of incipient madness might find malign delight in the anxiety of his friends to fall in with all his moods and not to cross him in anything he was pleased to say.

Joseph Addison had a political position and influence on the other side of the controversy which entitle him to be ranked among the statesmen of the day. Only in the year before his tragedy of 'Cato' had been brought out, and it had created an altogether peculiar sensation. Each of the two great political parties seized upon the opportunity given by Cato's pompous political virtue, and claimed him as the spokesman of their cause. The Whigs, of course, had the author's authority to appropriate the applause of Cato, and the Whigs had endeavoured to pack the House in order to secure their claim. But the Tories were equal to the occasion. They appeared in great numbers, Bolingbroke, then Secretary of State, at their head. When Cato lamented the extinguished freedom of his country the Whigs were vociferous in their cheers and glared fiercely at the Tories; but when the austere Roman was made to denounce Cæsar and a perpetual dictatorship the Tories professed to regard this as a denunciation of Marlborough and his demand to be made commander-in-chief for life, and they gave back the cheering with redoubled vehemence. At last Bolingbroke's own genius suggested a master-stroke. He sent for the actor who played

Digitized by Google

Cato's part, thanked him in face of the public, and presented him with a purse of gold because of the service he had done in sustaining the cause of liberty against the tyranny of a perpetual dictator.

Addison held many high political offices. He was Secretary to a Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland more than once; he was made Secretary to the 'Regents,' as they were called—the commissioners entrusted by George the First with the task of administration previous to his arrival in England. He sat in Parliament; he was appointed Under Secretary of State, and is soon to be for awhile one of the principal Secretaries of State. The last number of his *Spectator* was published at the close of 1714. This was indeed still a time when literary men might hold high political office. The deadening influence of the Georges had not yet quite prevailed against letters and art. Matthew Prior, about whose poetry the present age troubles itself but little, sat in Parliament, was employed in many of the most important diplomatic negotiations of the day, and had not long before this time held the office of Plenipotentiary in Paris. Richard Steele not merely sat in the House of Commons, but was considered of sufficient importance to deserve the distinction of a formal expulsion from the House because of certain political diatribes for which he was held responsible and which the Commons chose to vote libellous. At the time we are now describing he had re-entered Parliament, and was still a brilliant penman on the side of the Whigs. His career as

Digitized by Google

politician, literary man, and practical dramatist combined, seems in some sort a foreshadowing of that of Richard Brinsley Sheridan. Gay was appointed Secretary to Lord Clarendon on a diplomatic mission to Hanover. Nicholas Rowe, the author of the 'Fair Penitent' and the translator of Lucan's 'Pharsalia,' was at one time an Under Secretary of State. Rowe's dramatic work is not yet absolutely forgotten by the world. We still hear of the 'gallant gay Lothario,' although many of those who are glib with the words do not know that they come from the 'Fair Penitent,' and would not care even if they did know.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER III.

'LOST FOR WANT OF SPIRIT.'

WHEN Bolingbroke found himself in full power he began at once to open the way for some attempt at the restoration of the Stuart dynasty. He put influential Jacobites into important offices in England and Scotland; he made the Duke of Ormond Warden of the Cinque Ports, that authority covering exactly the stretch of coast at some point of which it might be expected that James Stuart would land if he were to make an attempt for the Crown at all. Ormond was a weak and vain man, but he was a man of personal integrity. He had been sent out to Flanders to succeed the greatest commander of the age as captain-general of the allied armies there, and he had naturally played a poor and even a ridiculous part. The Jacobites in England still, however, held him in much honour, identified his name, no one exactly knew why, with the cause of High Church, and elected him the hero and the leader of the movement for the restoration of the exiled family. Bolingbroke committed Scotland to the care of the Earl of Mar, a Jacobite, a personal friend of James Stuart, and a votary of High Church. It can hardly be supposed

Digitized by Google

that in making such an appointment Bolingbroke had not in his mind the possibility of a rising of the Highland clans against the Hanoverian succession. But it is none the less evident that Bolingbroke was as usual thinking far more of himself than of his party, and that his preparations were made not so much with a view to restoring the Stuarts, as with the object of securing himself against any chance that might befall.

Had Bolingbroke been resolved in his heart to bring back the Stuarts, had he been ready, as many other men were, to risk all in that cause, to stand or fall by it, he might, so far as one can see, have been successful. It is not too much to say that on the whole the majority of the English people were in favour of the Stuarts. Certainly the majority would have preferred a Stuart to the dreaded and disliked German prince from Herrenhausen. For many years the birthday of the Stuart prince had been celebrated as openly and as enthusiastically in English cities as if it were the birthday of the reigning sovereign. James's adherents were everywhere; in the court, in the camp, on the bench, in Parliament, in the drawing rooms, the coffee-houses, and the streets. Bolingbroke had only to present him at a critical moment, and say 'Here is your king,' and James Stuart would have been king. Such a crisis came in France in our own days. There was a moment, after the fall of the Second Empire, when the Count de Chambord had only to present himself in Versailles in order to be accepted as King of

Digitized by Google

France, not King of the French. But the Count de Chambord put away his chance deliberately; he would not consent to give up the white flag of legitimacy and accept the tricolor. He acted on principle, knowing the forfeit of his decision. The chances of James Stuart were frittered away in half-heartedness, insincerity, and folly. While Bolingbroke and his confederates were caballing and counselling, and paltering and drinking, the Whig statesmen were maturing their plans, and when the moment came for action it found them ready to act.

The success was accomplished by a *coup d'état* on Friday, July 30, 1714. The Queen was suddenly stricken with apoplexy. A Privy Council was to meet that morning at Kensington Palace. The Privy Council meeting was composed then, according to the principle which prevails still, only of such councillors as had received a special summons. In truth, the meeting of the Privy Council in Anne's time was like a Cabinet meeting of our days, and was intended by those who convened it to be just as strictly composed of official members. But, on the other hand, there was no law or rule forbidding any member of the Privy Council, whether summoned or not, to present himself at the meeting. Bolingbroke was in his place, and so was the Duke of Ormond, and so were other Jacobite peers. The Duke of Shrewsbury had taken his seat, as he was entitled to do, being one of the highest officers of State. Shrewsbury was known to be a loyal adherent of the Act of Settlement and the Hanoverian Succession. He was

Digitized by Google

a remarkable man with a remarkable history. His father was the unfortunate Shrewsbury who was killed in a duel by the Duke of Buckingham. The duel arose out of the duke's open intrigue with the Countess of Shrewsbury, and the story went at the time that the lady herself, dressed as a page, held her lover's horse while he fought with and killed her husband. Charles Talbot, the son, was brought up a Catholic, but in his twentieth year accepted the arguments of Tillotson and became a Protestant. He was Lord Chamberlain to James the Second; but lost all faith in James, and went over to Holland to assist William of Nassau with counsel and with money. When William became King of England he made Lord Shrewsbury a Privy Councillor and Secretary of State, created him first Marquis and afterwards Duke, and called him, in tribute to his great popularity, the King of Hearts. He was for a short time British Ambassador at the Court of France, and then Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. He had flickered a little between the Whigs and the Tories at different periods of his career, and in 1710 he actually joined the Tory party. But it was well known to everyone that if any question should arise between the House of Hanover and the Stuarts, he would stand firmly by the appointed succession. He was a man of undoubted integrity and great political sagacity; he had a handsome face, although he had lost one of his eyes by an accident when riding, and he had a stately presence. His gifts and graces were said to have so much attracted the

Digitized by Google

admiration of Queen Mary, that if she had outlived the king she would probably have married Shrewsbury. The condition of the political world around him had impressed him with so little reverence for courts and cabinets, that he used to say if he had a son he would rather bring him up a cobbler than a courtier, and a hangman than a statesman. Bolingbroke once kindly said of him, 'I never knew a man so formed to please, and to gain upon the affections while challenging the esteem.'

Before there was time to get to any of the business of the Council the doors were opened, and the Duke of Argyll and the Duke of Somerset entered the room. The Duke of Argyll, soldier, statesman, orator, shrewd self-seeker, represented the Whigs of Scotland; the honest, proud, pompous Duke of Somerset, those of England. The two intruders, as they were assuredly regarded by the majority of those present, announced that they had heard the news of the Queen's danger, and that they felt themselves bound to hasten to the meeting of the Council, although not summoned thither, in order that they might be able to afford advice and assistance.

The Duke of Somerset was in many respects the most powerful nobleman in England. But all his rank, his dignity, and his influence could not protect him against the ridicule and contempt which his feeble character, his extravagant pride, and his grotesquely haughty demeanour invariably brought upon him. He was probably the most ridiculous man of his time: he had the pomp of an Eastern

Digitized by Google

Pasha without the grave dignity which Eastern manners confer. He was like the Pasha of a burlesque or an *opéra bouffe*. His servants had to obey him by signs; he disdained to give orders by voice. His first wife was Elizabeth Percy, the virgin widow of Lord Ogle and Tom Thynne of Longleat, the beloved of Charles John Königsmark, the 'Carrots' of Dean Swift. While she was Duchess of Somerset and Queen Anne's close friend, Swift, who hated her, hinted pretty broadly that she was privy to Königsmark's plot to murder Tom Thynne, and the Duchess revenged herself by keeping the Dean out of the bishopric of Hereford. When she died Somerset married Lady Charlotte Finch, one of the 'Black Funereal Finches,' celebrated by Sir Charles Hanbury Williams. Once, when she tapped him on the shoulder with a fan, he rebuked her angrily: 'My first wife was a Percy, and she never took such a liberty.' When he had occasion to travel, all the roads on or near which he had to pass were scoured by a vanguard of outriders, whose business it was to protect him, not merely from obstruction and delay, but from the gaze of the vulgar herd who might be anxious to feast their eyes upon his gracious person. The statesmen of his own time, while they made use of him, seem to have vied with each other in protestations of their contempt for his abilities and his character. Swift declared that Somerset had not 'a grain of sense of any kind.' Marlborough several times professed an utter contempt for Somerset's abilities or discretion, and was indignant at the idea

Digitized by Google

that he ever could have made use of such a man in any work requiring confidence or judgment. Yet Somerset, ridiculous as he was, came to be a personage of importance in the crisis now impending over England. He was, at all events, a man whose word could be trusted, and who, when he promised to take a certain course, would be sure to follow it. That very pride which made him habitually ridiculous raised him on great occasions above any suspicion of mercenary or personal views in politics. One of his contemporaries describes him as 'so humoursome, proud, and capricious, that he was rather a ministry spoiler than a ministry maker.' In the present condition of things, however, he could be made use of for the purpose of making one ministry after spoiling another. When he carried his great personal influence over to the side of the Hanoverian accession, and joined with Argyll and with Shrewsbury, it must have been evident, to men like Bolingbroke at least, that the enterprises of the Jacobites would require rare good fortune and marvellous energy to bring them to any success.

Poetry and romance have shown to the world the most favourable side of the character of John Campbell, Duke of Argyll, who was then at least as powerful in Scotland as the Duke of Somerset in England. Pope describes him as

> Argyll, the State's whole thunder born to wield;
> And shake alike the senate and the field.

Scott has drawn a charming picture of him in the 'Heart of Mid-Lothian' as the patriotic Scotchman,

Digitized by Google

whose heart must 'be cold as death can make it when it does not warm to the tartan'—the kind and generous protector of Jeanie Deans. Argyll was a man of many gifts. He was a soldier, a statesman, and an orator. He had charged at Ramillies and Oudenarde, had rallied a shrinking column at Malplaquet, and served in the sieges of Ostend and Lille and Ghent. His eloquence in the House of Lords is said to have combined the freshness of youth, the strength of manhood, and the wisdom of old age. Lord Hervey, who is not given to praise, admits that Argyll was 'gallant, and a good officer, with very good parts, and much more reading and knowledge than generally falls to the share of a man educated a soldier, and born to so great a title and fortune.' But Hervey also says that Argyll was 'haughty, passionate, and peremptory,' and it cannot be doubted that he was capable of almost any political tergiversation, or even treachery, which could have served his purpose; and his purpose was always his own personal interest. He changed his opinions with the most unscrupulous promptitude; he gave an opinion one way and acted another way without hesitation, and without a blush. He was always equal to the emergency; he had the full courage of his non-convictions. He was the grandson of that Argyll whose last sleep before his execution is the subject of Mr. Ward's well-known painting; his great-grandfather, too, gave up his life on the scaffold. He did not want any of the courage of his ancestors; but he was likely to take care that his advancement should not be to the block or the

Digitized by Google

gallows. At such a moment as this which we are now describing, his adhesion and his action were of inestimable value to the Hanoverian cause.

When these two great peers entered the Council chamber a moment of perplexity and confusion followed. Bolingbroke and Ormond had probably not even yet a full understanding of the meaning of this dramatic performance, and what consequences it was likely to ensure. While they sat silent, according to some accounts, the Duke of Shrewsbury arose, and gravely thanking the Whig peers for their courtesy in attending the Council, accepted their co-operation in the name of all the others present. They took their places at the Council table, and St. John and Ormond must have begun to feel that all was over. The intrusion of the Whig peers was a daring and a significant step in itself, but when the Duke of Shrewsbury welcomed their appearance and accepted their co-operation, it was clear to the Jacobites that all was part of a pre-arranged scheme, to which resistance would now be in vain. The new visitors to the Council called for the reports of the royal physician, and having received and read them, suggested that the Duke of Shrewsbury should be recommended to the Queen as Lord High Treasurer. St. John did not venture to resist the proposal; he could only sit with as much appearance of composure as he was enabled to maintain, and accept the suggestion of his enemies. A deputation of the peers, with the Duke of Shrewsbury among them, at once sought and obtained an interview with the dying Queen. She gave the Lord High Treasurer's

Digitized by Google

staff into Shrewsbury's hand, and bade him, it is said, in that voice of singular sweetness and melody which was almost her only charm, to use it for the good of her people.

The office of Lord High Treasurer is now always put into what is called commission; its functions are managed by several ministers, of whom the First Lord of the Treasury is one and the Chancellor of the Exchequer another. In all recent times the First Lord of the Treasury has usually been Prime Minister, and his office therefore corresponds fairly enough with that which was called the office of Lord High Treasurer in earlier days. It was clear that when the Duke of Shrewsbury became Lord High Treasurer at such a junction he would stand firmly by the Protestant succession, and would oppose any kind of scheming in the cause of the exiled Stuarts.

Some writers near to that time, and Mr. Lecky among more recent historians, are of opinion that it was not either of the intruding dukes who proposed that Shrewsbury should be appointed Treasurer. Mr. Lecky is even of opinion that it may have been Bolingbroke himself who made the suggestion. That seems to us extremely probable. All accounts agree in confirming the idea that Bolingbroke was taken utterly by surprise when the great Whig dukes entered the Council chamber. The moment he saw that Shrewsbury welcomed them, he probably made up his mind to the fact that an entirely new condition of things had arisen, and that all his previous calculations were upset. He was not

Digitized by Google

a man to remain long dumbfounded by any change in the state of affairs. It would have been quite consistent with his character and his general course of action if, when he saw the meaning of the crisis, he had at once resolved to make the best of it and to try to keep himself still at the head of affairs. In that spirit nothing is more likely than that he should have pushed himself to the front once more, and proposed as Lord High Treasurer the man whom, but for the sudden and overwhelming pressure brought to bear upon him, he would have tried to keep out of all influence and power at such a moment.

The appointment of the Duke of Shrewsbury settled the question. The crisis was virtually over. The Whig statesmen at once sent out summonses to all the members of the Privy Council living anywhere near London. That same afternoon another meeting of the Council was held. Somers himself, the great Whig leader whose services had made the party illustrious in former reigns, and whose fame sheds a lustre on them even to this hour—Somers, aged, infirm, decaying as he was in body and in mind—hastened to attend the summons, and to lend his strength and his authority to the measures on which his colleagues had determined. The Council ordered the concentration of several regiments in and near London. They recalled troops from Ostend, and sent a fleet to sea. General Stanhope, a soldier and statesman of whom we shall hear more, was prepared, if necessary, to take possession of the Tower and clap the leading Jacobites into it, to obtain possession of all

Digitized by Google

the outports, and, in short, to act as military dictator, authorised to anticipate revolution and to keep the succession safe. In a word the fate of the Stuarts was sealed. Bolingbroke was checkmated; the Chevalier de St. George would have put to sea in vain. Marlborough was on his way to England, and there was nothing to do but to wait till the breath was out of Queen Anne's body, and proclaim George the Elector King of England.

The time of waiting was not long; Anne sank into death on August 1, 1714, and the heralds proclaimed that 'the high and mighty Prince George, Elector of Brunswick and Lüneburg, is, by the death of Queen Anne of blessed memory, become our lawful and rightful liege lord, King of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, Defender of the Faith.' This 'King of France' was lucky enough not to come to his throne until the conclusion of a long war against the King of France who lived in Versailles. The 'Defender of the Faith' was just now making convenient arrangements that his mistresses should follow him as speedily as possible when he should have to take his unwilling way to his new dominions.

On August 3 Bolingbroke wrote a letter to Dean Swift, in which he says, 'The Earl of Oxford was removed on Tuesday; the Queen died on Sunday. What a world this is, and how does fortune banter us!' In other words, Bolingbroke tells Swift that full success seemed within his grasp on Tuesday, and was suddenly torn away from him on Sunday. But the most characteristic part of the letter is a passage

Digitized by Google

which throws a very blaze of light over the unconquerable levity of the man. 'I have lost all by the death of the Queen but my spirit; and, I protest to you, I feel that increase upon me. The Whigs are a pack of Jacobites; that shall be the cry in a month, if you please.' No sooner is one web of intrigue swept away than Bolingbroke sets to work to weave a new one on a different plan. Nothing can subdue those high animal spirits; nothing can physic that selfishness; nothing can fix that levity to a recognition of the realities of things. Bolingbroke has not a word now about the cause of the Stuarts; for the moment he cannot think of that. His new scheme is to make out that his enemies were after all the true Jacobites; he will checkmate them that way—'in a month, if you please.' On the very same day Mr. John Barber, the printer of some of Swift's pamphlets, afterwards an Alderman and Lord Mayor, writes to Swift and tells him, speaking of Bolingbroke, that 'when my lord gave me the letter' (to be enclosed to Swift) 'he said he hoped you would come up and help to save the constitution, which with a little good management might be kept in Tory hands.' The chill, clear common sense of Swift's answer might have impressed even Bolingbroke; but did not.

One among the Tories indeed would have had the courage to forestall the Whigs and their proclamation. This one man was a priest, and not a soldier. Atterbury, the eloquent Bishop of Rochester, came to Bolingbroke, and urged him to proclaim King James at Charing Cross, offering himself to head a

Digitized by Google

procession in his lawn sleeves if Bolingbroke would only act on his advice. But for the moment Bolingbroke could only complain of fortune's banter, and plan out new intrigues for the restoration, not of the Stuarts, but of the Tory party—that is to say, of himself. His refusal wrung from Atterbury the declaration that the best cause in England was lost for want of spirit.

Parliament assembled, and on August 5 the Commons were summoned to the Bar of the House of Lords, and the Lord Chancellor made a speech in the name of the Lords of the Regency. He told the Lords and Commons that the Privy Council appointed by George, Elector of Hanover, had proclaimed that Prince as the lawful and rightful sovereign of these realms. Both Houses agreed to send addresses to the King, expressing their duty and affection; and the House of Commons passed a bill granting to His Majesty the same civil list as that which Queen Anne had enjoyed, but with additional clauses for the payment of arrears due to the Hanoverian troops who had been in the service of Great Britain. The Lord Chancellor, who had just addressed the House of Lords and the Commoners standing at the Bar, was himself a remarkable illustration of the politics and the principles of that age. Simon Harcourt had been Lord Chancellor in the later years of Queen Anne's life. His appointment ended with her death; but he was reappointed by the Lords of the Regency in the name of the new sovereign, and he was again sworn in as Lord

Digitized by Google

Chancellor on August 3, 1714, 'in Court at his house aforesaid, Lincoln's Inn Fields, *Anno Primo, Georgii Regis.*' He was one of the Lords Justices by virtue of his office, and, as such, had already taken the oath of allegiance to the new sovereign and of abjuration to James. Lord Harcourt had been throughout his whole career not only a very devoted Tory, but in later years a positive Jacobite. He was a highly accomplished speaker, a man of great culture, and a lawyer of considerable, if not pre-eminent, attainments. He was still comparatively young for a public man of such position. Born in 1660, he entered Pembroke College, Oxford, in 1675, was admitted to the Inner Temple in 1676, and called to the Bar in 1683. He became Member of Parliament for Abingdon in 1690, and soon rose to great distinction in the House of Commons as well as at the Bar. He conducted the impeachment of the great Lord Somers, and was knighted and made Solicitor-General by Anne in 1702. He became Attorney-General shortly after. He conducted in 1703 the prosecution of Defoe for his famous satirical tract, 'The Shortest Way with the Dissenters.' Harcourt threw himself into the prosecution with the fervour and the bitterness of a sectary and a partisan. He made a most vehement and envenomed speech against Defoe; he endeavoured to stir up every religious prejudice and passion in favour of the prosecution. Coke had scarcely shown more of the animosity of a partisan in prosecuting Raleigh than Simon Harcourt did in prosecuting Defoe. In 1709–10 Harcourt was the

Digitized by Google

leading counsel for Sacheverell, and received the Great Seal in 1710, becoming, as the phrase then was, 'Lord Keeper of the Great Seal of Great Britain.' A whole year, wanting only a few days, passed before he was raised to the peerage as Lord Harcourt. He acted as Speaker of the House of Lords before he became a peer and a member of the House, and even had on one occasion to express on behalf of the Peers their thanks to Lord Peterborough for his services in Spain. In 1713, he became Lord Chancellor of England. During all this time he had been a most devoted adherent of the Stuarts, and during the later period he was an open and avowed Jacobite. He had opposed strongly the oaths of abjuration which now, as Lord Chief Justice, he had both taken and administered. Almost his first conspicuous act as a Member of Parliament was to protest against the Bill which required the oath of abjuration of James and his descendants, and he maintained consistently the same principles and the same policy till the death of Queen Anne. There can be no doubt that if just then any movement had been made on behalf of the Stuarts with the slightest chance of success, Lord Chancellor Harcourt would have thrown himself into it heart and soul. Nevertheless, he took the oath of allegiance and the oath of abjuration; he professed to be a loyal subject of the King whose person and principles he despised and detested, and he swore to abjure for ever all adhesion to that dynasty which with all his heart he would have striven, if he could, to restore to the throne of England. Lord Campbell,

Digitized by Google

in his 'Lives of the Lord Chancellors,' says of Harcourt, 'I do not consider his efforts to restore the exiled Stuarts morally inconsistent with the engagements into which he had entered to the existing Government, and although there were loud complaints against him for at last sending in his adhesion to the House of Hanover, it should be recollected that the cause of the Stuarts had then become desperate, and that instead of betraying he did everything in his power to screen his old associates.' The cause of the Stuarts had not become, even then, so utterly desperate as to prevent many brave men from laying down their lives for it. Thirty years had to pass away before the last blow was struck for that cause of the Stuarts which Harcourt by solemn oath abjured for ever. Such credit as he is entitled to have, because he protected rather than betrayed his old associates, we are free to give him, and it stands a significant illustration of the political morality of the time that such comparative credit is all that his enthusiastic biographer ventures to claim for him.

The House of Lords had then two hundred and seven members, many of whom, being Catholics, were not permitted to take any part in public business. That number of Peers is about in just proportion to the population of England as it was then when compared with the Peers and the population of England at present. In the House of Commons there were at the same time five hundred and fifty-eight members. England sent in five

Digitized by Google

hundred and thirteen, and Scotland, which had lately accepted the union, returned forty-five. It need hardly be said that at that time Ireland had her own Parliament, and sent no members to Westminster. A great number of the county family names in the House of Commons were just the same as those which we see at present. The Stanhopes, the Lowthers, the Lawsons, the Herberts, the Harcourts, the Cowpers, the Fitzwilliams, the Cecils, the Grevilles ; all these, and many others, were represented in Parliament then as they are represented in Parliament now. Then, as more lately, the small boroughs had the credit of returning, mostly of course through family influence, men of eminence other than political, who happened to sit in the House of Commons. Steele sat for Stockbridge in "Southampton County," as Hampshire was then always called, Addison for Malmesbury, Prior for East Grinstead. There were no reports of the debates, nor printed lists of the divisions Questions of foreign policy were sometimes discussed with doors strictly closed against all strangers, just as similar questions are occasionally, and not infrequently, discussed in the Senate of the United States at present. The pamphlet supplied in some measure the place of the newspaper report and the newspaper leading article. Some twelve years later than this the brilliant pen of Bolingbroke who, if he had lived at a period nearer to our own, might have been an unrivalled writer of leading articles, was able to obtain for the series of pamphlets called 'The Craftsman' a circulation greater than that ever enjoyed

Digitized by Google

by the 'Spectator.' Pulteney co-operated with him for a time in the work. Steele, as we have said, had been expelled from the House of Commons for his pamphlet 'The Crisis.' The caricature which played so important a part in political controversy all through the reigns of the Georges had just come into recognised existence. Countless caricatures of Bolingbroke, of Walpole, of Shrewsbury, of Marlborough, began to fly about London. Scurrilous ballads were of course in great demand, nor was the supply inadequate to the demand.

One of the most successful of these compositions described the return of the Duke of Marlborough to London. On the very day of the Queen's death Marlborough landed at Dover. He came quickly on to London, and there, according to the descriptions given by his admirers, he was received like a restored sovereign returning to his throne. A procession of two hundred gentlemen on horseback met him on the road to London, and the procession was joined shortly after by a long train of carriages. As he entered London the enthusiasm deepened with every foot of the way; the streets were lined with crowds of applauding admirers. Marlborough's carriage broke down near Temple Bar, and he had to exchange it for another. The little incident was only a new cause for demonstrations of enthusiasm. It was a fresh delight to see the hero more nearly than he could be seen through his carriage windows. It was something to have delayed him for a moment, and to have compelled him to stand amongst the

Digitized by Google

crowd of those who were pressing round to express their homage. This was the Whig description. According to Tory accounts Marlborough was more hissed than huzzaed, and at Temple Bar the hissing was loudest. The work of the historian would be comparatively easy if eye-witnesses could only agree as to any, even the most important, facts.

Enthusiastic Whig pamphleteers called upon their countrymen to love and honour their invincible hero, and declared that the wretch would be esteemed a disgrace to humanity, and should be transmitted to posterity with infamy, who would dare to use his tongue or pen against him. Such wretches, however, were found, and did not seem in the least to dread the infamy which was promised them. The scurrilous ballad of which we have already spoken was by one Ned Ward, a publican and rhymester, and it pictured the entry of the Duke in verses after the fashion of Hudibras. It depicted the procession as made up of—

> Frightful troops of thin-jawed zealots,
> Curs'd enemies to kings and prelates;

and declared that those 'champions of religious errors' made London seem

> As if the Prince of Terrors
> Was coming with his dismal train
> To plague the city once again.

The memory of what the Plague had done in London was still green enough to give bitter force to this allusion.

Marlborough could have afforded to despise what

Digitized by Google

Hotspur calls the 'metre-ballad-mongers,' but his pride received a check and chill not easily to be got over. When fairly rid of his enthusiastic followers and admirers he went to the House of Lords almost at once, and took the oaths; but he did not remain there. In truth, he soon found himself bitterly disappointed; not with the people—they could not have been more enthusiastic than they were—but with the new ruling power. Immediately after the death of the Queen, and even before the proclamation of the new sovereign had taken place, the Hanoverian resident in London handed to the Privy Council a letter from George, in George's own handwriting, naming the men who were to act in combination with the seven great officers of State as lords justices. The power to make this nomination was provided for George by the Regency Act. This document contained the names of eighteen of the principal Whig peers; the Duke of Shrewsbury, the Duke of Somerset, and the Duke of Argyll were amongst them; so, too, were Lords Cowper, Halifax, and Townshend. It was noted with wonder that the illustrious name of Somers did not appear on the list, nor did that of Marlborough nor that of Marlborough's son-in-law, Lord Sunderland. It is likely that the omission of these names was only made in the first instance because George and his advisers were somewhat afraid of his getting into the hands of a sort of dictatorship—a dictatorship in commission, as it might be called, made up of three or four influential men. The King afterwards hastened to show every attention to Marl-

Digitized by Google

borough and Somers and Sunderland, and he soon restored Marlborough to all his public offices. But George seems to have had a profound and a very well-justified distrust of Marlborough. Though he honoured him with marks of respect and attention, though he restored him to the great position he had held in the State, yet the King never allowed Marlborough to suppose that he really had regained his former influence in court and political life. Marlborough was shelved, and he already knew it, and bitterly complained of it.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IV.

THE KING COMES.

'THE old town of Hanover,' says Thackeray, 'must look still pretty much as in the time when George Louis left it. The gardens and pavilions of Herrenhausen are scarce changed since the day when the stout old Electress Sophia fell down in her last walk there, preceding but by a few weeks to the tomb James the Second's daughter, whose death made way for the Brunswick Stuarts in England. . . . You may see at Herrenhausen the very rustic theatre in which the Platens danced and performed masques and sang before the Elector and his sons. There are the very fauns and dryads of stone still glimmering through the branches, still grinning and piping their ditties of no tone, as in the days when painted nymphs hung garlands round them, appeared under their leafy arcades with gilt crooks, guiding rams with gilt horns, descended from "machines" in the guise of Diana or Minerva, and delivered immense allegorical compliments to the princes returned home from the campaign.' Herrenhausen indeed is changed but little since those days of which Thackeray speaks. But although not many years have passed since

Digitized by Google

Thackeray went to visit Hanover before delivering his lectures on 'The Four Georges,' Hanover itself has undergone much alteration. If one of the Georges could now return to his ancestral capital he would indeed be bewildered at the great new squares, the rows of tall vast shops and warehouses, the spacious railway station, penetrated to every corner at night by the keen electric light. But in passing from Hanover to Herrenhausen one goes back, in a short drive, from the days of the Emperor William of Germany to the days of George the Elector. Herrenhausen, the favourite residence of the Electors of Hanover, is but a short distance from the capital. Thackeray speaks of it as an ugly place, and it certainly has not many claims to the picturesque. But it is full of a certain curious half-melancholy interest, and well fitted to be the cradle and the home of a decaying Hanoverian dynasty. In its galleries one may spend many an hour, not unprofitably, in studying the faces of all the men and women who are famous, notorious, or infamous in connection with the history of Hanover. The story of that dynasty has more than one episode not unlike that of the unfortunate Sophia Dorothea and Königsmark, her lover. A good many grim legends haunt the place and give interest to some of the faces, otherwise insipid enough, which look out of the heavy frames and the formal court dresses of the picture gallery.

On the evening of August 5, 1714, four days after Queen Anne's death, Lord Clarendon, the lately

Digitized by Google

appointed English Minister at the Court of Hanover, set out for the palace of Herrenhausen to bear to the new King of Great Britain the tidings of Queen Anne's death. About two o'clock in the morning he entered the royal apartments of the ungenial and sleepy George, and, kneeling, did homage to him as King of Great Britain. George took the announcement of his new rank without even a semblance of gratification. He had made up his mind to endure it, and that was all. He was too stolid, or lazy, or sincere to affect the slightest personal interest in the news. He lingered in Hanover as long as he decently could, and sauntered for many a day through the prim, dull, and orderly walks of Herrenhausen. He behaved very much in the fashion of the convict in Prior's poem, who, when the cart was ready and the halter adjusted,

Often took leave but seemed loth to depart.

August 31 had arrived before George began his journey to England. But he did one or two good-natured things before leaving Hanover; he ordered the abolition of certain duties on provisions, and he had the insolvent debtors throughout the Electorate discharged from custody. On September 5 he reached the Hague, and here another stoppage took place. The exertion of travelling from Hanover to the Hague had been so great that George apparently required a respite from September 5 until the 16th. On the 16th he embarked, and reached Greenwich two days after. He was accompanied to England by his two leading favourites—the ladies whose charms we have already

Digitized by Google

described. For many days after his arrival in London the King did little but lament his exile from his beloved Herrenhausen, and tell everyone he met how cordially he disliked England, its people, and its ways. Fortunately perhaps in this respect for the popularity of His Majesty, George's audience was necessarily limited. He spoke no English, and hardly any of those who surrounded him could speak German, while some of his ministers did not even speak French. Sir Robert Walpole tried to get on with him by talking Latin. Even the English oysters George could not abide; he grumbled long at their queer taste, their want of flavour, and it was some time before his devoted attendants discovered that their monarch liked stale oysters with a good strong rankness about them. No time was lost, when this important discovery had been made, in procuring oysters to the taste of the King, and one of George's objections to the throne of England was easily removed.

There was naturally great curiosity to see the King, and a writer of the time gives an amusing account of the efforts made to obtain a sight of him. 'A certain person has paid several guineas for the benefit of Cheapside conduit, and another has almost given twenty years' purchase for a shed in Stocks Market. Some lay out great sums in shop windows, others sell lottery tickets to hire cobblers' stalls, and here and there a vintner has received earnest for the use of his sign-post. King Charles the Second's horse at the aforesaid market is to carry double, and His

Digitized by Google

Majesty at Charing Cross is to ride between two draymen. Some have made interest to climb chimneys, and others to be exalted to the airy station of a steeple.'

The princely pageant which people were so eager to see lives still in a print issued by 'Tim. Jordan and Tho. Bakenwell at Ye Golden Lion in Fleet Street.' We are thus gladdened with a sight of the splendid procession winding its way through St. James's Park to St. James's Palace. There are musketeers and trumpeters on horseback; there are courtly gentlemen on horse and a-foot, and great lumbering, gilded, gaudily-bedizened carriages with four and six steeds, and more trumpeters—on foot this time—and pursuivants and heralds—George was fond of heralds, and created two of his own, Hanover and Gloucester—and then the royal carriage, with its eight prancing horses, and the Elector of Hanover and King of England inside, with his hand to his heart, and still more soldiers following, both horse and foot, and, of course, a loyal populace everywhere waving their three-cornered hats and huzzaing with all their might.

The day of the entry was not without its element of tragedy. In the crowd Colonel Chudleigh called Mr. Charles Aldworth, M.P. for New Windsor, a Jacobite. There was a quarrel, the gentlemen went to Marylebone Fields, exchanged a few passes, and Mr. Aldworth was almost immediately killed. This was no great wonder, for we learn, in a letter from Lord Berkeley of Stratton, preserved in the Went-

Digitized by Google

worth Papers, describing the duel, that Mr. Aldworth had such a weakness in his arms from childhood that he could not stretch them out, a fact, Lord Berkeley hints, by no means unknown to his adversary.

Horace Walpole has left a description of King George which is worth citation. 'The person of the King,' he says, 'is perfect in my memory as if I saw him yesterday; it was that of an elderly man, rather pale, and exactly like his pictures and coins; not tall, of an aspect rather good than august, with a dark tie-wig, a plain coat, waistcoat and breeches of snuff-coloured cloth, with stockings of the same colour, and a blue riband over all.' George was fond of heavy dining and heavy drinking. He often dined at Sir Robert Walpole's, at Richmond Hill, where he used to drink so much punch that even the Duchess of Kendal endeavoured to restrain him, and received in return some coarse admonition in German. He was shy and reserved in general, and he detested all the troublesome display of royalty. He hated going to the theatre in state, and he did not even care to show himself in the front of the royal box; he preferred to sit in another and less conspicuous box with the Duchess of Kendal and Lady Walsingham. On the whole, it would seem as if the inclination of the English people for the Hanoverian dynasty was about to be tried by the severest test that fate could well ordain. A dull, stolid, and profligate king, fond of drink and of low conversation, without dignity of appearance or manner, without sympathy of any kind with the English people and English ways, and with-

Digitized by Google

out the slightest knowledge of the English language, was suddenly thrust upon the people and proclaimed their king. Fortunately for the Hanoverian dynasty, the English people, as a whole, had grown into a mood of comparative indifference as to who should rule them so long as they were let alone. It was impossible that a strong feeling of loyalty to any House should burn just then in the breast of the great majority of the English people. Those who were devoted to the Stuarts and those who detested the Stuarts felt strongly on the subject this way or that, and they would therefore admire or detest King George, according to their previously acquired political principles. But to the ordinary Englishman it only seemed that England had lately been trying a variety of political systems and a variety of rulers; that one seemed to succeed hardly better than the other; that so long as no great break-down in the system took place, it mattered little whether a Stuart or a Brunswick was in temporary possession of the throne. Within a comparatively short space of time the English Parliament had deposed Charles the First; the Protectorate had been tried under Cromwell; the Restoration had been brought about by the adroitness of Monk; James the Second, a Catholic, had come to the throne, and had been driven off the throne by William the Third; William had established a new dynasty and a new system, which was no sooner established than it had to be succeeded by the introduction to the throne of one of the daughters of the displaced House of Stuart. England had not had time to become attached, or even

Digitized by Google

reconciled, to any of these succeeding rulers, and the English people in general—the English people outside the circle of courts and parliament and politics—were well satisfied when George came to the throne to let anyone wear the crown who did not make himself and his system absolutely intolerable to the nation.

The old-fashioned, romantic principle of personal loyalty, unconditional loyalty—the loyalty of Divine right—was already languishing unto death. It was now seen for the last time in effective contrast with what we may call the modern principle of loyalty. The modern principle of loyalty to a sovereign is that which, having decided in favour of monarchical Government and of an hereditary succession, resolves to abide by that choice, and for the sake of the principle and of the country to pay all respect and homage to the person of the chosen ruler. But the loyalty which still clung to the fading fortunes of the Stuarts was very different from this, and came into direct contrast with the feeling shown by the majority of the people of England towards the House of Hanover. Though faults and weaknesses beyond number, weaknesses which were even worse than actual faults, tainted the character and corroded the moral fibre of every successive Stuart prince, the devotees of personal loyalty still clung with sentiment and with passion to the surviving representatives of the fallen dynasty. Poets and balladists, singers in the streets and singers on the mountain-side, were even in these early days of George the First inspired with

Digitized by Google

songs of loyal homage in favour of the son of James the Second. Men and women in thousands, not only among the wild romantic hills of Scotland, but in prosaic North of England towns, and yet more prosaic London streets and alleys, were ready, if the occasion offered, to die for the Stuart cause. Despite the evidence of their own senses, men and women would still endow any representative of the Stuarts with all the virtues and talents and graces that might become an ideal prince of romance. No one thought in this way of the successors of William the Third. No one had had any particular admiration for Queen Anne, either as a sovereign or as a woman; nobody pretended to feel any thrill of sentimental emotion towards portly, stolid, sensual George the First. About the King personally hardly anybody cared anything. The mass of the English people who accepted him and adhered to him did so because they understood that he represented a certain quiet homely principle in politics which would secure tranquillity and stability to the country. They did not ask of him that he should be noble, or gifted, or dignified, or even virtuous. They asked of him two things in especial: first, that he would maintain a steady system of government; and next, that he would in general let the country alone. This is the feeling which must be taken into account if we would understand how it came to pass that the English people so contentedly accepted a sovereign like George the First. The explanation is not to be found merely in the fact that the Stuarts, as a race, had discredited

Digitized by Google

themselves hopelessly with the moral sentiment of the people of England. The very worst of the Stuarts, Charles the Second, was not any worse as regards moral character than George the First, or than some of the Georges who followed him. In education and in mental capacity he was far superior to any of the Georges. There were many qualities in Charles the Second which, if his fatal love of ease and of amusement could have been kept under control, might have made him a successful sovereign, and which, were he in private life, would undoubtedly have made him an eminent man. But the truth is that the old feeling of blind unconditional homage to the sovereign was dying out; it was dying of inanition and old age and natural decay. Other and stronger forces in political thought were coming up to jostle it aside, even before its death hour, and to occupy its place. A King was to be in England for the future a respected and honoured chief magistrate appointed for life and to hereditary office. This new condition of things influenced the feelings and conduct of hundreds of thousands of persons who were not themselves conscious of the change. This was one great reason why George the First was so easily accepted by the country. The King was in future to be a business King, and not a King of sentiment and romance.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER V.

WHAT THE KING CAME TO.

THE population of these islands at the close of the reign of Queen Anne was probably not more than one-fifth of its present amount. It is not easy to arrive at a precise knowledge with regard to the number of the inhabitants of England at that time, because there was no census taken until 1801. We have, therefore, to be content with calculations founded on the number of houses that paid certain taxes, and on the register of deaths. This is of course not a very exact way of getting at the result, but it enables us to form a tolerably fair general estimate. According to these calculations, then, the population of England and Wales together was something like five millions and a half. The population of Ireland at the same time appears to have been about two millions; that of Scotland little more than one. But the distribution of the population of these countries was very different then from that of the present day. Now the great cities and towns form the numerical strength of England and Scotland at least, but at that time the agricultural districts had a much larger proportion of the population than the

Digitized by Google

towns could boast of. London was then considered a vast and enormous city, but it was only a hamlet when compared with the London which we know. Even then it absorbed more than one-tenth of the whole population of England and Wales. At the beginning of the reign of King George the First, London had a population of about seven hundred thousand, and it is a fact worthy of notice, that rapidly as the population of England has grown between that time and this, the growth of the metropolis has been even greater in proportion. The City and Westminster were at the beginning of George's reign, and for long after, two distinct and separate towns ; between them still lay many wide spaces on which men were only beginning to build houses. Fashion was already moving westward in the metropolis, obeying that curious impulse which seems to prevail in all modern cities, and which makes the West End as eagerly sought after in Paris, in Edinburgh, and in New York, as in London. The life of London centred in St. Paul's and the Exchange ; that of Westminster in the Court and the Houses of Parliament. All around the old Houses of Parliament were lanes, squares, streets, and gateways covering the wide spaces and broad thoroughfares with which we are familiar. Between Parliament Buildings and the two churches of St. Peter and St. Margaret ran a narrow, densely crowded street, known as St. Margaret's Lane. The spot where Parliament Street now opens into Bridge Street was part of an uninterrupted row of houses running down to the

Digitized by Google

water gate by the river. The market house of the old Woollen Market stood just where Westminster Bridge begins. The Parliament Houses themselves are as much changed as their surroundings. St. Stephen's Gallery now occupies the site of St. Stephen's Chapel, where the Commons used to sit. Westminster Hall had rows of little shops or booths ranged all along each wall inside; they had been there for generations, and they certainly did not add either to the beauty or the safety of the ancient hall. In the early part of the seventeenth century some of them took fire and came near to laying in ashes one of the oldest occupied buildings in the world. Luckily, however, the fire was put out with slight damage, but the dangerous little shops were suffered to remain then and for long after.

The Lesser London of that day lives for us in contemporary engravings, in the pages of the 'Spectator' and the 'Tatler,' in the poems of Swift and Pope, in the pictures of Hogarth. Hogarth's men and women belong indeed to a later generation than the generation which Bolingbroke dazzled, and Marlborough deceived, and Arbuthnot satirised, and Steele made merry over. But it is only the men and women who are different; the background remains the same. New actors have taken the parts; the costumes are somewhat altered, but the scenes are scarcely changed. There may be a steeple more or a signboard less in the streets that Hogarth drew, than there were when Addison walked them, but practically they are the same, and remained the same for a still later genera-

Digitized by Google

tion. Maps of the time show us how curiously small London was. There is open country to the north just beyond Bloomsbury Square; Sadler's Wells is out in the country, so is St. Pancras, so is Tottenham Court, so is Marylebone. At the east Stepney lies far away, a distant hamlet. Beyond Hanover Square to the west stretch fields again, where Tyburn Road became the road to Oxford. There is very little of London south of the river.

The best part of the political and social life of this small London was practically lived in the still smaller area of St. James's, a term which generally includes rather more than is contained within the strict limits of St. James's parish. If some Jacobite gentleman or loyal Hanoverian courtier of the year 1714 could revisit to-day the scenes in which he schemed and quarrelled, he would find himself among the familiar names of strangely unfamiliar places. St. James's Park indeed has not altered out of all recognition since the days when Duke Belair and my Lady Betty and my Lady Rattle walked the Mall between the hours of twelve and two, and quoted from Congreve about laughing at the great world and the small. There were avenues of trees then as now. Instead of the ornamental water ran a long canal, populous with ducks, which joined a pond called—no one knows why—Rosamund's Pond. This pond was a favourite trysting place for happy lovers—'the sylvan deities and rural powers of the place sacred and inviolable to love, often heard lovers' vows repeated by its streams and echoes'—and a convenient water for unhappy

Digitized by Google

lovers to drown themselves in, if we may credit the 'Tatler.' St. James's Palace and Marlborough House on its right are scarcely changed; but to the left only Lord Godolphin's house lay between it and the pleasant park where the deer wandered. Farther off, where Buckingham Palace now is, was Buckingham House. It was then a stately country mansion on the road to Chelsea, with semicircular wings and a sweep of iron railings enclosing a spacious court, where a fountain played round a Triton driving his sea-horses. On the roof stood statues of Mercury, Liberty, Secrecy, and Equity, and across the front ran an inscription in great gold letters, '*Sic Siti Lætantur Lares.*' The household gods might well delight in so fair a spot and in the music of that 'little wilderness full of blackbirds and nightingales,' which the bowl-playing Duke who built the house lovingly describes to his friend Shrewsbury.

Most of the streets in the St. James's region bear the names they bore when King George first came to London. But it is only in name that they are unchanged. The street of streets, St. James's Street, is metamorphosed indeed since the days when grotesque signs swung overhead, and great gilt carriages lumbered up and down from the park, and the chairs of modish ladies crowded up the narrow thoroughfares. Splendid warriors, fresh from Flanders or the Rhine, clinked their courtly swords against the posts; red-coated country gentlemen jostled their wondering way through the crowd; and the Whig and Tory beaux, with ruffles and rapiers, powder and

Digitized by Google

perfume, haunted the coffee-houses of their factions. Not a house of the old street remains as it was then; not one of the panelled rooms in which minuets were danced by candlelight to the jingle of harpsichord and tinkle of spinet, where wits planned pamphlets and pointed epigrams, where statesmen schemed the overthrow of ministries and even of dynasties, where flushed youth punted away its fortunes or drank away its senses, and staggered out perhaps, through the little crowd of chairmen and link-boys clustered at the door, to extinguish its foolish flame in a duel at Leicester Fields. All that world is gone; only the name of the street remains, as full in its way of memories and associations as the S.P.Q.R. at the head of a municipal proclamation in modern Rome.

The streets off St. James's Street, too, retain their ancient names, and nothing more—King Street, Ryder Street, York Street, Jermyn Street, the spelling of which seems to have puzzled last century writers greatly, for they wrote it 'Jermyn,' 'Germain,' 'Germaine,' and even 'Germin.' St. James's Church, Wren's handiwork, is all that remains from the age of Anne, with 'the steeple,' says Strype fondly, 'lately finished with a fine spire, which adds much splendour to this end of the town, and also serves as a landmark.' Perhaps it sometimes served as a landmark to Richard Steele, reeling happily to the home in 'Berry' Street, where his beloved Prue awaited him. St. James's Square has gone through many metamorphoses since it was first built in 1665, and called the Piazza. In 1714 there was a rectangular

Digitized by Google

enclosure in the centre with four passages at the sides, through which the public could come and go as they pleased. In a later generation the inhabitants railed the enclosure round, and set in the middle an oval basin of water, large enough to have a boat upon it. In old engravings we see people gravely punting about on the quaint little pond. The fulness of time filled in the pond and set up King William the Third instead in the middle of a grassy circle. It would take too long to enumerate all the changes that our Georgian gentleman would find in the London of his day. Some few, however, are especially worth recording. He would seek in vain for the 'Pikadilly' he knew, with its stately houses and fair gardens. It was almost a country road to the left of St. James's Street, between the Green Park and Hyde Park, with meadows and the distant hills beyond. Going eastward, he would find that a Henrietta Street and a King Street still led into Covent Garden; but the Covent Garden of his time was an open place with a column and a sun-dial in the middle. Handsome dwellings for persons of repute and quality stood on the north side over those arcades which were fondly supposed by Inigo Jones, who laid out the spot, to resemble the Piazza in Venice. Inigo Jones built the church, too, which is to be seen in the 'Morning' plate of Hogarth's 'Four Times of the Day.' This church was destroyed by fire in 1795, and was rebuilt in its present form by Hardwick.

Charing Cross was still a narrow spot where three streets met; what is now Trafalgar Square was

Digitized by Google

covered with houses and the royal mews. St. Martin's Church was not built by Gibbs for a dozen years later, in 1726. Soho and Seven Dials were fashionable neighbourhoods; Mrs. Theresa Cornelys' house of entertainment, of which we hear so much from the writers of the time of Anne, was considered to be most fashionably situated; ambassadors and peers dwelt in Gerrard Street; Bolingbroke lived in Golden Square. Traces of former splendour still linger about these decayed neighbourhoods; paintings by Sir James Thornhill, Hogarth's master and father-in-law, and elaborate marble mantle-pieces with Corinthian columns and entablatures still adorn the interiors of some of these houses; bits of quaint Queen Anne architecture and finely-wrought iron railings still lend an air of faded gentility to some of the dingy exteriors. Parts of London that are now fashionable had not then come into existence. Grosvenor Square was only begun in 1716, and it was not until 1725 that the new quarter was sufficiently advanced for its creator, Sir Richard Grosvenor, to summon his intending tenants to a 'splendid entertainment,' at which the new streets and squares were solemnly named.

Though we of to-day have seen a good deal of what are called Anne and Georgian houses of red brick curiously gabled springing up in all directions, we must not suppose that the London of 1714 was chiefly composed of such cheerful buildings. Wren and Vanbrugh would be indeed surprised if they could see the strange works that are now done, if not in

Digitized by Google

their name, at least in the name of the age for which they built their heavy, plain, solid houses. We can learn easily enough from contemporary engravings what the principal London streets and squares were like when George the Elector became George the King. There are not many remains now of Anne's London, but Queen Anne's Gate, some few houses in Queen Square, Bloomsbury, and here and there a house in the City, preserve the ordinary architecture of the age of Anne. Marlborough House bears witness to what it did in the way of more pretentious buildings.

The insides of these houses were scarcely less like the 'Queen Anne revival' of our time than the outsides. The rooms were, as a rule, sparingly furnished. There would be a centre table, some chairs, a settee, a few pictures, a mirror, possibly a spinet or musical instrument of some kind, some shelves perhaps for displaying the Chinese and Japanese porcelain which everyone loved, and, of course, heavy window curtains. Smaller tables were used for the incessant tea-drinking. Large screens kept off the too frequent draughts. Handsomely wrought stoves and andirons stood in the wide fireplaces. The rooms themselves were lofty; the walls of the better kind wainscoted and carved, and the ceilings painted in allegorical designs. Wall papers had only begun to come into use within the last few years of Anne's reign; windows were long and narrow, and small panes were a necessity, as glass makers had not yet attained the art of casting large sheets of glass. The

Digitized by Google

stairs were exceedingly strait; it was mentioned as a recommendation to new houses that two persons could go upstairs abreast. The rents would seem curiously low to Londoners of our time; houses could be got in Pall Mall for two hundred a year, and in good parts of the town for thirty, forty, and fifty pounds a year. Lady Wentworth, in 1705, describes a house in Golden Square, with garden, stables, and coach house, the rent of which was only threescore pounds a year. Pretty riverside houses let at from five to ten pounds a year. Lodgings would seem cheap now, though they were not held so then, for Swift complains of paying eight shillings a week when he lodged in Bury Street for a dining-room and bedroom on the first floor.

There was no general numbering of houses in 1714; that movement of civilisation did not take place until 1764. Places were known by their signs or their vicinity to a sign. 'Blue Boars,' 'Black Swans,' and 'Red Lions' were in every street, and people lived at the 'Red Bodice,' or over against the 'Pestle.' The 'Tatler' tells a story of a young man seeking a house in Barbican for a whole day through a mistake in a sign, whose legend read 'This is the Beer,' instead of 'This is the Bear.' Another tried to get into a house at Stocks Market under the impression that he was at his own lodgings at Charing Cross, being misled by the fact that there was a statue of the King on horseback in each place. Signs were usually very large, and jutted so far out from the houses that in narrow streets they frequently touched

Digitized by Google

one another. As it was the fashion to have them carefully painted, carved, gilded, and supported by branches of wrought iron, they were often very costly, some being estimated as worth more than a hundred guineas.

The ill-paved streets were too often littered with the refuse which careless householders, reckless of fines, flung into the open way. In wet weather the rain roared along the kennel, converting all the accumulated filth of the thoroughfare into loathsome mud. The gutter spouts which then projected from every house did not always cast their cataracts clear of the pavement, but sometimes soaked the unlucky passer-by who had not kept close to the wall. Umbrellas were the exclusive privilege of women; men never thought of carrying them. Those whose business or pleasure called them abroad in rainy weather and who did not own carriages might hire one of the eight hundred two-horsed hackney carriages; jolting, uncomfortable machines, with perforated tin sashes instead of window glasses, and grumbling, ever-dissatisfied drivers. There were very few sedan chairs; these were still a comparative novelty for general use, and their bearers are much abused for their drunkenness, clumsiness, and incivility.

The streets were always crowded. Coaches, chairs, wheelbarrows, fops, chimney sweeps, porters bearing huge burdens, bullies swaggering with great swords, bailiffs chasing some impecunious poet, cut-purses, funerals, christenings, weddings and street fights, would seem from some contemporary accounts

Digitized by Google

to be invariably mixed up together in helpless and apparently inextricable confusion. The general bewilderment was made more bewildering by the very babel of street cries bawled from the sturdy lungs of orange girls, chair menders, broom sellers, ballad singers, old clothes men, and wretched representatives of the various gaols, raising their plaintive appeal to 'remember the poor prisoners.' The thoroughfares, however, would have been in still worse condition but for the fact that so much of the passenger traffic of the metropolis was done by water and not by land. The wherries on the Thames were as frequent as the gondolas on the canals of Venice. Across the river, down the river, up the river, passengers hurried incessantly in the swift little boats that plied for hire, and were rowed by one man with a pair of sculls or two men with oars. Despite the numbers of the river steamers at present, and the crowds who take advantage of them, it may well be doubted whether so large a proportion of the passenger traffic of London is borne by the river in the days of Queen Victoria as there was in the days of Queen Anne.

Darkness and danger ruled the roads at night with all the horrors of the Rome of Juvenal. Oil lamps flickered freely in some of the better streets, but even these were not lit so long as any suggestion of twilight served for an excuse to delay the illumination. When the moon shone they were not lit at all. Link boys drove a busy trade in lighting belated wanderers to their homes, and saving them from the perils of places where the pavement was taken up or

Digitized by Google

where open sewers yawned. Precaution was needful, for pitfalls of the kind were not always marked by warning lanthorns. Footpads roamed about, and worse than footpads. The fear of the Mohocks had not yet faded from civic memories, and there were still wild young men enough to rush through the streets, wrenching off knockers, insulting quiet people, and defying the watch. Indeed, the watch were as a rule as unwilling to interfere with dangerous revellers as were the billmen of Messina, and seem to have been little better than thieves or Mohocks themselves. They are freely accused of being ever ready to levy blackmail upon those who walked abroad at night by raising ingenious accusations of insobriety, and insisting upon being bought off, or conveying their victim to the round-house.

The Fleet Ditch, which is almost as much of a myth to our generation as the stream of black Cocytus itself, was an unsavoury reality still in the London which George the First entered. It was a tributary of the Thames which, rising somewhere among the gentle hills of Hampstead, sought out the river and found it at Blackfriars. At one time it was used for the conveyance of coals into the city, and colliers of moderate size used to ascend it for a short distance. But towards the end of Anne's reign, and indeed for long before, it had become a mere trickling puddle, discharging its filth and refuse and sewage into the river, and poisoning the air around it.

Mayfair was still, and for many years later, celebrated in the now fashionable quarter which

Digitized by Google

bears its name. The fair lasted for six weeks, and left about six months' demoralisation behind it. 'Smock races'—that is to say, races run by young women for a prize of a laced chemise, the competitors sometimes being attired only in their smocks—were still to be seen in Pall Mall and various other places. This popular amusement was kept up in London until 1733, and lingered in country places to a much later time. Bartholomew Fair was scarcely less popular, or less renowned for its speciality of roast sucking pig, than in the days when Ben Jonson's Master Little-Wit, and his wife Win-the-Fight, made acquaintance with its wild humours. There is a coloured print of about this time which gives a sufficiently vivid presentment of the fair. At Lee and Harper's booth the tragedy of 'Judith and Holofernes' is announced by a great glaring painted cloth, while the platform is occupied by a gentleman in Roman armour and a lady in Eastern attire, who are no doubt the principal characters of the play. A gaudy Harlequin and his brother Scaramouch invite the attention of the passers-by. In another booth rope-dancing of men and women is offered to the less tragically minded, and in yet another the world renowned Faux displays the announcement of his conjuring marvels. A peep-show of the siege of Gibraltar allures the patriotic. Toy-shops, presided over by attractive damsels, lure the light-hearted and the light-fingered too, for many an intelligent pickpocket seizes the opportunity to rifle the pocket of some too occupied customer. There is a revolving swing, and

Digitized by Google

go-carts are drawn by dogs for the delight of children. Hucksters go about selling gin, aniseed, and fruits, and large booths offer meat, cider, punch, and skittles. The place is thronged with visitors and beggars. A portly figure in a scarlet coat and wearing an order is said to be no less a person than Sir Robert Walpole, who is rumoured to have occasionally honoured the fair with his presence.

Few of the clubs that play so important a part in the history of last-century London had come into existence in 1714. The most famous of them either were not yet founded, or lived only as coffee or chocolate houses. There had been literary associations like the 'Scriblerus' Club, which was started by Swift, and was finally dissolved by the quarrels of Oxford and Bolingbroke. The 'Saturday' and 'Brothers' Clubs had been political societies, at both of which Swift was all powerful, but they, too, were no more. The 'Kit-Kat' Club, of mystic origin and enigmatic name, with all its loyalty to Hanover and all its memories of bright toasts, of Steele, Addison, and Godfrey Kneller, had passed away in 1709, and met no more in Shire Lane, off Fleet Street, or at the 'Upper Flask' Inn at Hampstead. It had not lived in vain, according to Walpole, who declared that its patriots had saved the country. Within its rooms the evil-omened Lord Mohun had broken the gilded emblem of the crown off his chair. Jacob Tonson, the bookseller, who was secretary to the club, querulously insisted that the man who would do that would cut a man's throat, and Lord Mohun's fatal career fully

Digitized by Google

justified Tonson's judgment. If the Kit-Kat patriots had saved the country, the Tory patriots of the October Club were no less prepared to do the same. The October Club came first into importance in the latest years of Anne, although it had existed since the last decade of the seventeenth century. The stout Tory squires met together in the 'Bell' Tavern, in narrow, dirty King Street, Westminster, to drink October ale, under Dahl's portrait of Queen Anne, and to trouble with their fierce, uncompromising Jacobitism the fluctuating purposes of Harley and the crafty counsels of St. John. The genius of Swift tempered their hot zeal with the cool air of his 'advice.' Then the wilder spirits seceded, and formed the March Club, which retained all the angry Jacobitism of the parent body, but lost all its importance. There were wilder associations, like the Hell-Fire Club, which under the presidency of the Duke of Wharton was distinguished for the desperate attempts it made to justify its name. But it was, like its president, short-lived and soon forgotten. There are fantastic rumours of a Calves' Head Club, organised in mockery of all kings, and especially of the royal martyrs. It was said by obscure pamphleteers to be founded by John Milton; but whether the body ever had any real existence seems now to be uncertain.

Next to the clubs came the 'mug houses.' The mug houses were political associations of a humbler order, where men met together to drink beer and denounce the Whigs or Tories, according to their convictions. But at this time the coffee-houses occu-

Digitized by Google

pied the most important position in social life. There were a great many of them, each with some special association which still keeps it in men's memories. At Garraway's, in Change Alley, tea was first retailed at the high prices which then made tea a luxury. The 'Rainbow,' in Fleet Street, the second coffee-house opened in London, is mentioned in the 'Spectator'; the first was Bowman's, in St. Michael's Alley, Cornhill. Lloyd's, in Lombard Street, was dear to Steele and Addison. At Don Saltero's, by the river at Chelsea, Mr. Salter exhibited his collection of curiosities and delighted himself, and no one else, by playing the fiddle. At the 'Smyrna,' Prior and Swift were wont to receive their acquaintances. From the 'St. James's,' the last house but one on the south-west corner of St. James's Street, the 'Tatler' dated its foreign and domestic news, and conferred fame on its waiter, Mr. Kidney, 'who has long conversed with and filled tea for the most consummate politicians.' It was the head-quarters of Whigs and officers of the Guards; letters from Stella were left here for Swift, and here in later years originated Goldsmith's 'Retaliation.' Will's, at the north corner of Russell Street and Bow Street, famous for its memories of Dryden and for the 'Tatler's' dramatic criticisms, had ceased to exist in 1714. Its place was taken by Button's, at the other side of Russell Street, started by Addison in 1712. Here, later, was the lion-head letter-box for the 'Guardian,' designed by Hogarth. At Child's, in St. Paul's Churchyard, the 'Spectator' often smoked a pipe. Sir Roger de

Digitized by Google

Coverley was beloved at Squire's, near Gray's Inn Gate. Slaughter's, in St. Martin's Lane, was often honoured by the presence, first of Dryden, and then of Pope. Serle's, near Lincoln's Inn, was cherished by the law. At the 'Grecian,' in Devereux Court, Strand, learned men met and quarrelled; a fatal duel was once fought in consequence of an argument there over the accent on a Greek word. At the 'Grecian,' too, Steele amused himself by putting the action of Homer's Iliad into an exact journal and planning his 'Temple of Fame.' From White's chocolate house, which afterwards became the famous club, came Mr. Isaac Bickerstaff's 'Accounts of Gallantry, Pleasure, and Entertainment.' The 'Cocoa Tree' was the Tory coffee-house in St. James's Street. Ozinda's chocolate house, next to St. James's Palace, was also a Tory resort, and its owner was arrested in 1715 for supposed complicity in Jacobite conspiracy.

To these coffee and chocolate houses came all the wit and all the fashion of London. Men of letters and statesmen, men of the robe and men of the sword, lawyers, dandies, poets, and philosophers, met there to discuss politics, literature, scandal, and the play. There were often very strange figures among the motley crowd behind the red-curtained windows of a St. James's coffee-house. The gentleman who made himself so agreeable to the barmaid, or who chatted so affably about the conduct of the allies or the latest news from Sweden, might meet you again later on if your road lay at all outside town, and imperious

Digitized by Google

request you to stand and deliver. But of all the varied assembly the strangest figures must have been the beaux and exquisites, in all their various degrees of 'dappers,' 'fops,' 'smart fellows,' 'pretty fellows,' and 'very pretty fellows.' They made a brave show in many-coloured splendour of attire, heavily scented with orange-flower water, civet-violet, or musk, with large falbala periwigs, or long powdered duvilliers, with snuff-boxes and perspective glasses perpetually in their hands, and dragon or right Jamree canes, curiously clouded and amber-headed, dangling by a blue riband from the wrist or the coat button. The staff was as essential to an early Georgian gentleman as to an Athenian of the age of Pericles, and the cane-carrying custom incurred the frequent attacks of the satirists. Cane-bearers are made to declare that the knocking of the cane upon the shoe, leaning one leg upon it, or whistling with it in the mouth, were such reliefs to them in conversation that they did not know how to be good company without it. Some of these young men appear to have affected effeminacy, like an Agathon or a Henri Trois. Steele has put it on record that he heard some who set up to be pretty fellows, calling to one another at White's or the St. James's by the names of 'Betty,' 'Nelly,' and so forth.

Servants play almost as important parts as their masters in the humours of the time. Rich people were always surrounded by a throng of servants. First came the valet de chambre, who was expected to know a little of everything, from shaving and wig-making to skill in country sports, and had as much

Digitized by Google

experience in all town matters as a servant out of Terence or Molière. Last came the negro slave, who waited on my lord or my lady, with the silver collar of servitude about his neck.

Servants wore fine clothes and aped fine manners. The footmen of the Lords and Commons held mimic parliament while waiting for their masters at Westminster, parodying with elaborate care the proceedings of both Houses. They imitated their masters in other ways, too, taking their titles after the fashion made famous by Gil Blas and his fellow valets, and familiar by the farce of 'High Life Below Stairs.' The writer of the 'Patriot' of Thursday, August 19, 1714, satirises misplaced ambition by 'A discourse which I overheard not many evenings ago as I went with a friend of mine into Hyde Park. We found, as usual, a great number of gentlemen's servants at the park gate, and my friend, being unacquainted with the saucy custom of those fellows to usurp their masters' titles, was very much surprised to hear a lusty rogue tell one of his companions who inquired after his fellow-servant that his Grace had his head broke by the cook-maid for making a sop in the pan.' Presently after another assured the company of the illness of my lord bishop. 'The information had doubtless continued had not a fellow in a blue livery alarmed the rest with the news that Sir Edward and the marquis were at fisticuffs about a game at chuck, and that the brigadier had challenged the major-general to a bout at cudgels.'

It is only fair, after enumerating so many of

Digitized by Google

the eccentricities and discomforts of early Georgian London, to mention one proof of civilisation of which Londoners were then able to boast. London had a penny post, of which it was not unreasonably proud. This penny post is thus described in Strype's edition of Stow's 'Survey of London.' 'For a further convenience to the inhabitants of this city and parts adjacent for about ten miles compass, another post, and that a foot post, commonly called the penny post, was erected, and though at first set up by a private hand, yet, being of such considerable amount, is since taken into the post-office and made a branch of it. And in this all letters and parcels not exceeding a pound weight, and also any sum of money not above 10*l.* or parcel of 10*l.* value is safely conveyed, and at the charge of a penny, to all parts of the city and suburbs, and but a penny more at the delivery to most towns within ten miles of London, and to some towns at a farther distance. And for the better management of this office there are in London and Westminster six general post-offices . . . . at all which there constantly attend . . . . officers to receive letters and parcels from the several places appointed to take them in, there being a place or receiving house for the receipt thereof in most streets, with a table hung at the door or shop window, in which is printed in great letters "Penny Post Letters and Parcels are taken in Here." And at those houses they have letter carriers to call every hour. . . . All the day long they are employed, some in going their walks to bring in, and others to carry out.'

Digitized by Google

The next town in population to London was Bristol, and Bristol had then only one-seventeenth of London's population. The growth of the manufacturing industry, which has created such a cluster of great towns in the North of England, had hardly begun to show itself when George the First came to the throne. Bristol was not only the most populous place after London at this time, but it was the great English seaport. It had held this rank for centuries. Even at the time when 'Tom Jones' was written, many years after the accession of George the First, the Bristol Alderman filled the same place in popular imagination that is now assigned to the Alderman of London. Fielding attributes to the Bristol Alderman that fine appreciation of the qualities of turtle soup with which more modern humorists have endowed his metropolitan fellow.

Liverpool was hardly thought of in the early Georgian days. It was only made into a separate parish a few years before George came to the throne, and its first dock was opened in 1709. Manchester was comparatively obscure and unimportant, and had not yet made its first export of cotton goods. At this time Norwich, famous for its worsted and woollen works and its fuller's earth, surpassed it in business importance. By the middle of the century the population of Bristol is said to have exceeded ninety thousand; Norwich to have had more than fifty-six thousand; Manchester about forty-five thousand; Newcastle forty thousand; and Birmingham about thirty thousand, while Liverpool had swelled to about

Digitized by Google

thirty thousand, and ranked as the third port in the country. York was the chief city of the Northern counties; Exeter the capital of the West. Shrewsbury was of some account in the region towards the Welsh frontier. Worcester, Derby, Nottingham, and Canterbury were places of note. Bath had not come into its fashion and its fame as yet. Its first pump-room had been built only a few years before George entered England. The strength of England now, if we leave London out of consideration, lies in the north, and goes no further southward than a line which would include Birmingham. In the early days of the Georges this was just the part of England which was of least importance, whether as regards manufacturing energy or political power.

Ireland just then was quiet. It had sunk into a quietude something like that of the grave. Civil war had swept over the country; a succession of civil wars indeed had plagued it. There was a time just before the outbreak of the parliamentary struggle against Charles the First when, according to Clarendon, Ireland was becoming a highly prosperous country, growing vigorously in trade, manufacture, letters, and arts, and beginning to be, as he puts it, 'a jewel of great lustre in the royal diadem.' But civil war and religious persecution had blighted this rising prosperity, and for the evils coming from political proscription and religious persecution the statesmen of the time could think of no remedy but new proscription and fresh persecution. Roman Catholics were excluded from the legislature, from municipal corporations, and

Digitized by Google

from the liberal professions; they were not allowed to teach or be taught by Catholics; they were not permitted to keep arms; the trade and navigation of Ireland were put under ruinous restrictions and disabilities. In the reign of Anne new acts had been passed by the Irish Parliament, and sanctioned by the Crown 'to prevent the further growth of Popery.' Some of these later measures introduced not a few of the very harshest conditions of the penal code against Catholics. The Irish Parliament at that time was merely in fact what has since been called the British garrison; it consisted of the conquerors and the settlers. The Irish people had no more to do with it, except in the way of suffering under it, than the slaves in Georgia thirty years ago had to do with the Congress at Washington.

Dublin has perhaps changed less than London since 1714, but it has changed greatly notwithstanding. The Irish Parliament was already established in College Green, but not in the familiar building which it afterwards occupied. It met in Chichester House, which had been built as a hospital by Sir George Carew at the close of the sixteenth century. From him it passed into the possession of Sir Arthur Chichester, an English soldier of fortune, who had distinguished himself in France under Henry the Fourth, and who afterwards came to Ireland and played an active part in the plantation of Ulster. It was not until 1728 that Chichester House was pulled down, and the new building erected upon its site. Trinity College of course stood on College Green;

Digitized by Google

so did two other stately dwellings, Charlemont House and Clancarty House, both of which have long since passed away. There were several book-shops on the Green as well, and a great many taverns and coffee shops. The statue of King William the Third had been set up in 1701. The collegians professed great indignation at the manner in which the statue turned its back to the college gates, and the effigy was the object of many indignities, for which the students sometimes got into grave trouble with the authorities.

St. Patrick's Well was one of the great features of Dublin in the early part of the last century. It stood in the narrow way by Trinity College, the name of which had not long been altered from Patrick's Well Lane to Nassau Street. The change had been made in compliment to a bust of William the Third, which adorned the front of one of the houses, but for long after the place was much more associated with the well than with the House of Orange. The waters of the well were popularly supposed to have wonderful curative and health-giving properties, and it was much used. It dried up suddenly in 1729, and gave Swift the opportunity of writing some fiercely indignant national verses. But the water was restored to it in 1731, and it still exists in peaceful, half-forgotten obscurity in the College grounds.

Dawson Street, off Nassau Street, had only newly come into existence. It was called after Joshua Dawson, who had just built for himself a handsome mansion with gardens round it. He sold the house in 1715 to the Dublin Corporation to be used as a

Digitized by Google

Mansion House for their Lord Mayors. Where Molesworth and Kildare Streets now stand there was at this time a great piece of waste land called Molesworth Fields. Chapelizod, now a sufficiently populous suburb, was then the little village of Chappell Isoud, said to be so called from that Belle Isoud, daughter of King Anguish of Ireland, who was beloved by Tristram. The General Post Office in Sycamore Alley had for Postmaster-General Isaac Manley, who was a friend of Swift's. Manley incurred the Dean's resentment in 1718 by opening letters addressed to him. The postal arrangements were, as may be imagined, miserably defective. Owing to the carelessness of postmasters, the idleness of post boys, bad horses, and sometimes the want of horses, much time was lost and letters constantly miscarried.

The amusements of Dublin were those of London on a small scale. Dublin was as fond of its coffee-houses as London itself. Lucas's, in Cork Street, was the favourite resort of beaux, gamesters, and bullies. Here Talbot Edgeworth, Miss Edgeworth's ancestor, whom Swift called the 'prince of puppies,' displayed his follies, his fine dresses, and his handsome face, and believed himself to be the terror of men and the adoration of women, till he died mad in the Dublin Bridewell. The yard behind Lucas's was the theatre of numerous duels, which were generally witnessed from the windows by all the company who happened to be present. These took care that the laws of honourable combat were observed. Close at hand was the 'Swan' Tavern, in Swan Alley, a district devoted

Digitized by Google

chiefly to gambling-houses. On Cork Hill was the cock-pit royal, where gentlemen and ruffians mingled together to witness and wager on the sport. Cork Hill was not a pleasant place at night. Pedestrians were often insulted and roughly treated by the chairmen hanging about Lucas's and the 'Eagle' Tavern. Even the waiters of these establishments sometimes amused themselves by pouring pailfuls of foul water upon the aggrieved passer-by. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that an Irish edition of the Hell Fire Club was set up at the 'Eagle' in 1735. The roughness of the time found its way into the theatre in Smock Lane, which was the scene of frequent political riots. Dublin had its Pasquin or Marforio in an oaken image, known as the 'Wooden Man,' which had stood on the southern side of Essex Street, not far from Eustace Street, since the end of the seventeenth century.

Cork, Limerick, Waterford, and Belfast were the only considerable towns in Ireland after the Irish capital. Not many years had passed since Cork was besieged by Marlborough himself, and taken from King James. The Duke of Grafton, one of the sons of Charles the Second, was killed then in a little street or lane, which still commemorates the fact by its name. The same year that saw Marlborough besieging Cork saw Limerick invested by the forces of King William under William's own command. The Irish general, Sarsfield, held out so gallantly that William had to give up the attempt, and it was not until the following year, and after the cause of James

Digitized by Google

had gone down everywhere else, that Sarsfield consented to accept the terms, most honourable to him, of the famous Treaty of Limerick. There was but little feeling in Ireland in favour of the Chevalier at the time of Queen Anne's death. Any sympathy with the Stuart cause that still lingered was sentimental merely, and even as such hardly existed among the great mass of the people. To these, indeed, the change of masters could matter but little; they had had enough of the Stuarts, and the conduct of James the Second during his Irish campaign had made his name and his memory despised. Rightly or wrongly, he was charged with cowardice—he who in his early days had heard his bravery in action praised by the great Turenne—and the charge was fatal to him in the minds of the Irish people. The penal laws of Anne's days were not excused because of any strong Jacobite sympathies or active Jacobite schemes in Ireland.

The Union between England and Scotland was only seven years old when George came to the throne of these kingdoms, and already an attempt had been made by a powerful party in Scotland to obtain its repeal. The union was unquestionably accomplished by Lord Somers and other English statesmen with the object of securing the succession much rather than the national interests of the Scottish people. It was for a long time detested in Scotland. The manner of its accomplishment, mainly by bribery and threats, made it more odious. Yet it was based on principles which secured the dearest interests of Scotland, and

Digitized by Google

respected the religious opinions of the population. Scottish law, Scottish systems, and the Scotch Church were left without interference, and constitutional security was given for the maintenance of the Presbyterian Establishment. In plain words, the Union admitted and maintained the rights and the claims of the great majority of the Scotch people, and, therefore, when the first heat of dislike to it had gone out, Scotland began to find that she could be old Scotland still, even when combined in one constitutional system with England. She soon accepted cordially the conditions which opened new ways to her industrial and trading energy, and did not practically interfere with her true national independence.

Edinburgh was then, and remained for generations to come, much the same as it appeared when Mary Stuart first visited it. Historians like Brantôme and poets like Ronsard lamented for their fair princess exiled in a savage land. But the daughter of the House of Lorraine might well have been content with the curious beauty of her new capital. Even now, more than three centuries since Mary Stuart landed in Scotland, and more than a century and a half since her descendant raised the standard of rebellion against the Elector of Hanover, Edinburgh Old Town retains more of its antique characteristics than either of the capitals of the sister kingdoms. It is true that the Northern Athens has followed the example of its Greek original in shifting the scene of its social life. The Attic Athens of to-day occupies a different site from that of the city of Pericles. New Edinburgh has

Digitized by Google

reared itself on the other bank of that chasm where once the North River flowed, and where now the trains run. Edinburgh, however, more fortunate than the city of Cecrops, while founding a new town has not lost the old. But at the time of the Hanoverian accession, and for generations later, not a house of the new town had been built. Edinburgh was still a walled city, with many gates or 'ports,' occupying the same ground that she had covered in the reign of James the Third, along the ridge between the grey Castle on the height at the west and haunted Holyrood in the plain at the east. All along this ridge rose the huge buildings, 'lands,' as they were called, stretching from peak to peak like a mountain range—five, six, sometimes ten storeys high—pierced with innumerable windows, crowned with jagged, fantastic roofs and gables, and as crowded with life as the 'Insulæ' of Imperial Rome. Over all rose the graceful pinnacle of St. Giles's Church, around whose base the booths of goldsmiths and other craftsmen clustered. The great main street of this old town was, and is, the Canongate, with its hundred or so of narrow closes or wynds running off from it at right angles. The houses in these closes were as tall as the rest, though the space across the street was often not more than four or five feet wide. The Canongate was Edinburgh in the early days of the last century far more than St. James's Street was London. Its high houses, with their wooden panellings, with the old armorial devices on their doors, and their common stair climbing from storey to storey outside, have seen the whole panorama of Scottish history pass by.

Digitized by Google

Life cannot have been very comfortable in Edinburgh. There were no open spaces or squares in the royalty, with the exception of the Parliament Close. The houses were so well and strongly built that the city was seldom troubled by fire, but they were poor inside, with low, dark rooms. We find, in consequence, that houses inhabited by the gentry in the early part of the eighteenth century were considered almost too bad for very humble folk at its close, and the success of the new town was assured from the day when its first foundation stone was laid. But if not very comfortable, life was quiet and simple. People generally dined at one or two o'clock in Edinburgh when George the First was king. Shopkeepers closed their shops when they dined and opened them again for business when the meal was over. There was very little luxury; wine was seldom seen on the tables of the middle classes, and few people kept carriages. There were not many amusements; friends met at each other's houses to take tea at five o'clock, and perhaps to listen to a little music; for the Edinburghers were fond of music, and an annual concert which was established early in the century lingered on till within three years of its close. But this simplicity was not immortal, and we hear sad complaints as the century grows old concerning the decadence of manners made manifest in the luxurious practice of dining as late as four or five, the freer use of wine, and other signs of over-civilisation.

Glasgow, in the Clyde valley, ranked next to Edinburgh in importance among Scotch towns. More

Digitized by Google

than twenty years later than the time of which we treat, the author of a pamphlet called 'Memoirs of the Times' could write, 'Glasgow is become the third trading city in the island.' But in 1714 the future of its commercial prosperity, founded upon its trade with the West Indies and the American colonies, had scarcely dawned. The Scotch merchants had not yet been able, from want of capital, and, it was said, the jealousy of the English merchants, to make much use of the privileges conferred upon them by the Union, and Glasgow was on the wrong side of the island for sharing in Scotland's slight Continental trade. Still, Glasgow was fairly thriving, thanks to the inland navigation of the Clyde. Some of its streets were broad; many of its houses substantial, and even stately. Its pride was. the great minster of St. Mungo's, 'a solid, weel-jointed mason-wark, that will stand as lang as the warld keep hands and gunpowther aff it,' to quote the enthusiastic words of Andrew Fairservice. The streets were often thronged with the wild Highlanders from the hills, who came down, as heavily and as variously armed as a modern Albanian chieftain, to trade in small cattle and shaggy ponies.

At this time the average Englishman knew little about the Lowlands and nothing about the Highlands of Scotland. The Londoner of the age of Anne would have looked upon any traveller who had made his way through the Highlands of Scotland with much the same curiosity as his descendants a generation or two later regarded Bruce

Digitized by Google

when he returned from Abyssinia, and would probably have received most of his statements with a politer but not less profound disbelief. It was cited as a proof of the immense popularity of the *Spectator*, that despite all the difficulties of intercommunication it found its way into Scotland. George the First had passed away, and George the Second was reigning in his stead, before any Englishman was found foolhardy enough to explore the Scottish Highlands, and lucky enough to escape unhurt, and publish an account of his experiences, and put on record his disgust at the monstrous deformity of the Highland scenery. But the Londoner in 1714 was scarcely better informed about the Scotch Lowlands. What he could learn was not of a nature to impress him very profoundly. Scotland then, and for some time to come, was very far behind England in many things; most of all, in everything connected with agriculture. In the villages, the people dwelt in rude but fairly comfortable cottages, made chiefly of straw-mixed clay, and straw-thatched. Wearing clothes that were usually home-spun, home-woven, and home-tailored; living principally, if not entirely, on the produce of his own farm, the Lowland farmer passed a life of curious independence and isolation. To plough his land, with its strange measurements of 'oxgate,' 'ploughgate,' and 'davoch,' he had clumsy wooden ploughs, the very shape of which is now almost a tradition, but which were certainly at least as primitive in construction as the plough Ulysses guided in his farm at Ithaca. Wheeled vehicles of any

Digitized by Google

kind, carts or wheelbarrows, were rarities. A parish possessed of a couple of carts was considered well provided for. Even where carts were known, they were of little use, they were so wretchedly constructed, and the few roads that did exist were totally unfit for wheeled traffic. Roads were as rare in Scotland then as they are to-day in Peloponnesus. An enterprising Aberdeenshire gentleman, Sir Archibald Grant, of Monymusk, is deservedly distinguished for the interest he took in road-making about the time of the Hanoverian accession. Some years later, statute labour did a little—a very little—towards improving the public roads, but it was not until after the rebellion of 1745, when the Government took the matter in hand, that anything really efficient was done. A number of good roads were then made, chiefly by military labour, and received in popular language the special title of the King's highways. But in the early part of the century there was little use for carts, even of the clumsiest kind. Such carriage as was necessary was accomplished by strings of horses tethered in Indian file, like the lines of camels in the East, and laden with sacks or baskets. The cultivation of the soil was poor; 'the surface was generally unenclosed; oats and barley the chief grain products; wheat little cultivated; little hay made for winter; the horses then feeding chiefly on straw and oats.' 'The arable land ran in narrow slips,' with 'stony wastes between, like the moraines of a glacier.' The hay meadow was an undrained marsh, where rank grasses mingled with rushes and other aquatic plants yielded

Digitized by Google

a coarse fodder. About the time when George the First became King of England, Lord Haddington introduced the sowing of clover and other grass seeds. Some ten years earlier, an Englishwoman, Elizabeth Mordaunt, daughter of the Earl of Peterborough, and wife of the Duke of Gordon, introduced into her husband's estates English ploughs, English ploughmen, the system of fallowing up to that time unknown in Scotland, planted moors, sowed foreign grasses, and showed the Morayshire farmers how to make hay.

As a natural result of the primitive and incomplete agriculture, dearth of food was frequent, and even severe famine, in all its horrors of starvation and death, not uncommon. When George the First came to the throne the century was not old enough for the living generation of Scotchmen to forget the ghastly seven years that had brought the seventeenth century to its close—seven empty ears blasted with east-wind. So many died of hunger, that in the grim words of one who lived through that time, 'the living were wearied with the burying of the dead.' The plague of hunger took away all natural and relative affections, 'so that husbands had not sympathy for their wives, nor wives for their husbands, parents for their children, nor children for their parents.' The saddest proof of the extent of the suffering is shown in the irreligious despair which seized upon the sufferers. Scotland then, as now, was strongly marked for its piety, but want made men defiant of heaven, prepared, like her who counselled

Digitized by Google

the man of Uz, to curse God and die by the roadside. Warned by no dream of thin and ill-favoured kine, the Pharaohs of Westminster had passed an Act, enforced while the famine was well begun, against the importation of meal into Scotland. At the sorest of the famine, the importation of meal from Ireland was permitted, and exportation of grain from Scotland prohibited. But, in the beginning of the eighteenth century, when the famine had but just subsided, a Government commission ordered that all loads of grain brought from Ireland into the West of Scotland should be staved and sunk.

The empire over which King George came to rule was as yet in a growing, almost a fluid condition. In North America England had, by one form of settlement or another, New York, but lately captured; New Jersey, the New England States, such as they then were, Virginia (an old possession), Maryland, South Carolina, Pennsylvania (settled by William Penn), whose death was now very near. Louisiana had just been taken possession of by the French. The city of New Orleans was not yet built. The French held the greater part of what was then known of Canada; Jamaica, Barbadoes, and other West Indian islands were in England's ownership. The great East Indian Empire was only in its very earliest germ; its full development was not yet foreseen by statesman, thinker, or dreamer. The English flag had only begun to float from the Rock of Gibraltar.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VI.

OXFORD'S FALL; BOLINGBROKE'S FLIGHT.

KING GEORGE did not make the slightest concealment of his intentions with regard to the political complexion of his future government. He did not attempt or pretend to conciliate the Tories, and, on the other hand, he was determined not to be a puppet in the hands of a 'Junto' of illustrious Whigs. He therefore formed a cabinet, composed exclusively, or almost exclusively, of pure Whigs; but he composed it of Whigs who at that time were only rising men in the political world. He was going to govern on Whig principles, but he was not going to be himself governed by another 'Junto' of senior Whig statesmen, like that which had been so powerful in the reign of William the Third. He acted with that shrewd, hard common sense which was an attribute of his family, and which often served instead of genius or enlightenment or intelligence, or even experience. A man of infinitely higher capacity than George might have found himself puzzled as to his proper policy under conditions entirely new and unfamiliar; but George acted as if the conditions were familiar to him, and set about governing England as he would have set about managing his household in Hanover;

Digitized by Google

and he somehow hit upon the course which under all the circumstances was the best he could have followed. It is not easy to see how he could have acted otherwise with safety to himself. It would have been idle to try to conciliate the Tories. The more active spirits among the Tories were, in point of fact, conspirators on behalf of the Stuart cause. The colourless Tories were not men whose influence or force of character would have been of much use to the King in endeavouring to bring about a reconciliation between the two great parties in the State. The civil war was not over, or nearly over, yet, and there were still to come some moments of crisis, when it seemed doubtful whether, after all, the cause supposed to be fallen might not successfully lift its head again. As the words of Scott's spirited ballad put it, before the Stuart crown was to go down, 'there are heads to be broke.' For George the First to attempt to form a Coalition Cabinet of Whigs and Tories at such a time would have been about as wild a scheme as for M. Thiers to have formed a Coalition Cabinet of Republicans and of Bonapartists, while Napoleon the Third was yet living at Chislehurst.

The Tories had been much discredited in the eyes of the country by the Peace of Utrecht. The long War of the Succession had been allowed to end without securing to England and to Europe the one purpose with which it was undertaken by the allies. It was a war to decide whether a French prince, a grandson of Louis the Fourteenth, and whose accession seemed to threaten a future union of Spain with France,

Digitized by Google

should or should not be allowed to ascend the throne of Spain. The end of the war left the French prince on the throne of Spain. Yet even this fact would not in itself have been very distressing or alarming to the English people, however it might have pained others of the allied states. The English people probably would never have drawn a sword against France in this quarrel if it had not been for the rash act of Louis the Fourteenth in recognising the chevalier, James Stuart, as King of England on the death of his father, James the Second. But England felt bitterly that the Peace of Utrecht left France and Louis not only unpunished, but actually rewarded. All the campaigns, the victories, the sacrifices, the genius of Marlborough, the heroism of his soldiers, had ended in nothing. Peace was secured at any price. It was not that the people of England did not want to have a peace made at the time. On the contrary, most Englishmen were thoroughly tired of the war, and felt but little interest in the main objects for which it had been originally undertaken. Most Englishmen would have agreed to the very terms which were contained in the Treaty, disadvantageous as these conditions were in many points. But they were ashamed of the manner in which the Treaty had been brought about, more than of the Treaty itself. France lost little or nothing by the arrangement: she sacrificed no territory, and was left with practically the same frontier which she had secured for herself twenty years before. Spain had to give up her possessions in Italy and the Low Countries.

Digitized by Google

The Dutch got very little to make up to them for their troubles and losses, but they could do nothing for themselves, and the English statesmen were determined not to continue the war. Yet, on the whole, these terms were not altogether unsatisfactory to the people of England. The war was becoming an insufferable burden. The National Debt was swollen to a size which alarmed at that time and almost horrified many persons, and there seemed no chance whatever of the expulsion of Philip, the French prince, from Spain. All these considerations had much influence over the public mind, and possibly would of themselves have entirely borne down the arguments of those who contended that an opportunity was now come to England of bringing France, so long her principal enemy and greatest danger, completely to her feet. Marlborough's victories had, indeed, made it easy to march to Paris and dictate there such terms of peace as would keep France powerless for generations to come. But the English people were disgusted by the manner in which the Treaty of Utrecht had been brought about. In order to secure that arrangement it was absolutely necessary to destroy the authority of Marlborough, and the Tory statesmen set about this work with the most shameless and undisguised pertinacity. Through the influence of Mrs. Masham, a cousin of the Duchess of Marlborough introduced by the Duchess herself to the Queen, the Tory statesmen contrived to get the Whig ministry dismissed, and a ministry formed under Harley and Bolingbroke. These statesmen opened secret negotiations with France. They were deter-

Digitized by Google

mined to bring about a peace by any sort of arrangement. They betrayed England's allies by entering into secret negotiations with the enemy, in express violation of the conditions of the alliance; they sacrificed the Catalonian populations of Northern Spain in the most shameless manner. The Catalans had been encouraged to rise against the French prince, and England had promised in return to protect them, and to secure them the restoration of all their ancient liberties. In making the peace the Catalans were wholly forgotten. The best excuse that can be made for the Tory ministers is to suppose that they positively and actually did forget all about the Catalans. Anyhow, the Catalans were left at the mercy of the new King of Spain, and were treated after the severest fashion of the time in dealing with conquered but obstinate rebels.

In order to make such a peace it was necessary to remove Marlborough. Some accusations were pressed against him to secure his removal. He was charged with having taken perquisites from the contractors who were supplying the army with bread, and with having deducted 2½ per cent. from the pay which England allowed to the foreign troops in her service. Marlborough's defence would not have been considered satisfactory in our day; and, indeed, it is impossible to think of any such accusation being made, or any such defence being needed, in times like ours. Imagination can hardly conceive the possibility of such charges being seriously made against the Duke of Wellington, for example, or the Duke of Wellington

Digitized by Google

condescending to plead custom and usage in reply to them. But in Marlborough's day things were very different, and Marlborough was able to show that, as regarded some of the accusations, he had only done what was customary among men in his position, and what he had full authority for doing; and, as regarded others, that he had applied the sums he got to the business of the State as secret service money, and had not made any personal profit. He did not, indeed, produce any accounts; but, assuming his defence to be well founded, it is quite possible that the keeping of accounts might have been an undesirable and inconvenient practice. At all events it was certain that Marlborough had not done any worse than other statesmen of the time in civil as well as in military service had been in the habit of doing; and, considering all the conditions of the period, the defence which he set up ought to have been satisfactory to everyone. It probably would have satisfied his enemies but that they were determined to get rid of him. They were, indeed, compelled to get rid of him in order to make their secret treaty with France, and they succeeded. Marlborough was dismissed from all his employments, and went for a time into exile. The English people, therefore, saw that peace had been made by the sacrifice of the greatest English commander who, up to that time, had ever taken the field in their service. The treaty had been obtained by the most shameless intrigues to bring about the downfall of this great soldier. No matter how desirable in itself the peace might be, no matter

Digitized by Google

how reasonable the conditions on which it was based, yet it became a national disgrace when secured by means like these. Nor was this all: the Tory statesmen finding it imperative for their purpose to have a majority in the House of Lords, as well as in the House of Commons, prevailed upon the Queen to stretch her royal prerogative to the extent of making twelve peers. All these new peers were Tories: one of them was Mr. Masham, husband of the woman who had assisted so efficiently in the degradation of the Duke of Marlborough. When they first appeared in the House of Lords, a Whig statesman ironically asked them whether they proposed to vote separately or by their foreman?

Never, perhaps, has a mean and treacherous policy like that which brought about the Treaty of Utrecht had so splendid a literary defence set up for it. Swift, with the guidance of Bolingbroke, and put up, indeed, to the work by Bolingbroke, devoted the best of his powers to defame Marlborough, and to justify the conduct of the Tory ministry. No matter how clear one's own opinions on the question may be, it is impossible, even at this distance of time, to study the writings of Swift on this subject without finding our convictions sometimes shaken. The biting satire, which seems only like cool common sense and justice taking their keenest tone; the masterly array, or perhaps we should rather say disarray, of facts, dates, and arguments; the bold assumptions which, by their very ease and confidence, bear down the reader's knowledge and judgment; the clear, unadorned,

Digitized by Google

style, made for convincing and conquering—all these qualities, and others too, unite with almost matchless force to make the worse seem the better cause. It is true that the mind of the reader is never impressed by Swift's vindication of the Tories, as it is always impressed by Burke's denunciation of the French Revolution. Swift does not make one see, as Burke does, that the whole soul and conscience of the author are in his work. Swift is evidently the advocate retained to conduct the case; Burke is the man of impassioned conviction, speaking out because he cannot keep silent. Still, we have all of us been sometimes made to question our own judgment, and almost to repudiate our own previously formed impressions as to facts, by the skill of some great advocate in a court of law; and it is skill of this kind, and of the very highest order, that we have to recognise in Swift's efforts to justify the policy of the Treaty of Utrecht. To make out any case it was necessary to endeavour to lower Marlborough in the estimation of the English people, just as it was necessary to destroy his power in order to get the ground open for the arrangement of the Treaty. Swift set himself to this task with a malignity equal to his genius. Arbuthnot, hardly inferior as a satirist to Swift, wrote a 'History of John Bull,' to hold up Marlborough and Marlborough's wife to ridicule and to hatred. He depicted the great soldier as a low and roguish attorney, who was deluding his clients into the carrying on of a long and costly lawsuit, for the mere sake of putting money into his own pocket.

Digitized by Google

He lampooned England's allies as well as England's great general: he described the Dutch, whom the Tory ministers had shamefully betrayed, as self-seeking and perfidious traitors, for whose protection we were sacrificing all, until we found out that they were secretly juggling with our enemies for our destruction. No stronger argument could be found to condemn the conduct of the Tory ministers than the mere fact that Swift and Arbuthnot failed to secure their acquittal at the bar of public opinion. All the attacks on Marlborough were inspired by Bolingbroke, and it has only to be added that Marlborough had been Bolingbroke's first and best benefactor.

The King appointed Lord Townshend his Secretary of State. The office was then regarded as that of First Lord of the Treasury is now: it carried with it the authority of Prime Minister. James Stanhope was Second Secretary. Walpole was at first put in the subordinate office of Paymaster-General, without a seat in the Cabinet; a place in administration which at a later period was assigned to no less a man than Edmund Burke. Walpole's political capacity soon, however, made it evident that he was fitted for higher office, and we shall find that he does not remain long at the post of Paymaster-General. The Duke of Shrewsbury had resigned both his offices; that of Lord Treasurer, and that of Viceroy of Ireland. Lord Sunderland accepted the Irish Viceroyalty, and the Lord Treasurership was put into commission and from that time was heard of no more. Next to

Digitized by Google

Walpole himself, the most notable man in the Administration—the man, that is to say, who became best known to the world afterwards—was Pulteney, now Walpole's devoted friend, before long to be his bitter and unrelenting enemy. Pulteney, just now, is still a very young man, only in his thirty-third year; but he is the hereditary representative of good Whig principles, and has already distinguished himself in the House of Commons as a skilful and fearless advocate of his political faith; he is a keen and clever pamphleteer; in later days, if he had lived then, he would doubtless have been a writer of leading articles in newspapers. His style is polished and penetrating, like that of an epigrammatist. He has travelled much for that time, and is what was then called an elegant scholar. The eloquent and silver-tongued Lord Cowper was restored to the office of Lord Chancellor, which he had already held under Queen Anne, and by virtue of which he had presided at the impeachment of Sacheverell. When Cowper was made Lord Keeper of the Great Seal by Anne in 1705, he was in the forty-first year of his age, but looked very much younger. He wore his own hair at that time, an unusual thing in Anne's days, and this added to his juvenile appearance. The Queen insisted that he must have his hair cut off and must wear a heavy wig; otherwise, she said, the world would think she had given the seals to a boy. Cowper was a prudent, cautious, clever man, whose abilities made a considerable impression upon his own time, but have carried his memory only in a

Digitized by Google

faint and feeble way on to ours. He was a fine speaker, so far as style and manner went, and he had a charming voice. Chesterfield said of him that the ears and the eyes gave him up the hearts and understandings of the audience. The Duke of Argyll became Commander-in-Chief for Scotland. In Ireland, Sir Constantine Phipps was removed from the office of Chancellor, on the ground of his Jacobite opinions; and it is a curious fact, worth noting as a sign of the times, that the University of Oxford unanimously agreed to confer on him an honorary degree almost immediately after—on the day, in fact, of the King's coronation.

Lord Townshend, the Prime Minister, as we may call him, was not a man of any conspicuous ability. He belonged to that class of competent, capable, trustworthy Englishmen who discharge satisfactorily the duties of any office to which they are called in the ordinary course of their lives. Such a man as Townshend would have made a respectable Lord Mayor, or a satisfactory Chairman of Quarter Sessions, if fortune had appointed him to no higher functions. He might have changed places probably with an average Lord Mayor or Chairman of Quarter Sessions without any particular effect being wrought on English history. Men of this stamp have nothing but official rank in common with the statesmen Prime Ministers, the Walpoles and Peels and Palmerstons; or with the men of genius, the Pitts and Disraelis and Gladstones. Lord Townshend had performed the regular functions of a statesman in

Digitized by Google

training at that time. He had been an Envoy Extraordinary, and had made treaties. He was a brother-in-law of Walpole. Just now, Walpole and he are friends as well as connections; the time came when Walpole and he were destined to quarrel; and then Townshend conducted himself with remarkable forbearance, self-restraint, and dignity. He was an honest and respectable man, blunt of speech, and of rugged homespun intelligence, about whom, since his day, the world is little concerned. Such name as he had is almost absorbed in the more brilliant reputation of his grandson—the spoiled child of the House of Commons, as Burke called him—that Charles Townshend of the famous 'Champagne Speech'; the Chancellor of the Exchequer of whom we shall hear a good deal later on, and who, by the sheer force of animal spirits, feather-headed talents and ignorance, became, in a certain perverted sense, the father of American Independence.

The Second Secretary of State, James, afterwards Earl, Stanhope, was a man of very different mould. Stanhope was one of the few Englishmen who have held high position in arms and politics. He had been a brilliant soldier; had fought in Flanders and Spain; had distinguished himself at Barcelona, even under a commander like Peterborough, whose daring spirit rendered it hard for any subaltern to shine in rivalry; had been himself raised to command, and kept on winning victories until his military genius found itself overcrowed by that of the great French captain, the Duke de Vendôme. His soldier's career

Digitized by Google

came to a premature close; as indeed his whole mortal career did not very long after the time at which we have now arrived. Stanhope was a man of scholarly education, almost a scholar; he had abilities above the common; he had indomitable energy, and was as daring and resolute in the council as in the field. He had a domineering mind, was outspoken and haughty; trampling over other men's opinions as a charge of cavalry treads down the grasses of the field it traverses. He made enemies, and did not heed their enmity. He was single-minded, and, what was not very common in that day, he was free from any love of money or taint of personal greed. He does not rank high either among statesmen or soldiers; but as statesman and soldier together he has made for himself a distinct and a peculiar place. His career will always be remembered without effort by the readers of English history.

A new Privy Council was formed which included the name of Marlborough. The Duchess of Marlborough urged her husband not to accept this office of barren honour. It is said that the one only occasion on which Marlborough had ventured to act against the dictation of his wife was when he thus placed himself again at the disposal of the King. He never ceased to regret that he had not followed her advice in this instance as in others. His proud heart soon burnt within him when he found that he was appreciated, understood, and put aside; mocked with

Digitized by Google

a semblance of power, humiliated under the pretext of doing him honour.

Much more humiliating, much more ominous, however, was the reception awaiting Oxford and Bolingbroke. From the moment of his arrival, the King showed himself determined to take no friendly notice of the great Tories. Oxford found it most difficult even to get audience of his Majesty. The morning after the King's arrival, Oxford was allowed, after much pressure and many entreaties, to wait upon the Sovereign, and to kiss his hand. He was received in chilling silence. Truly, it was not likely that much conversation would take place, seeing that George spoke no English and Oxford spoke no German. But there was something in the King's demeanour towards him, as well as in the mere fact that no words were exchanged, which must have told Oxford that his enemies were in triumph over him, and were determined to bring about his doom. Even before George had landed in England he had sent directions that Bolingbroke should be removed from his place of Secretary of State. On the last day of August, this order was executed in a manner which made it seem especially premature, and even ignominious. The Privy Council, as it stood, was then dissolved, and the new Council appointed, which consisted of only thirty-three members. Somers was one of this new Council, but in name alone; his growing years, his increasing infirmities, and the flickering decay of his once great intellect, allowed him but little chance of ever again taking an active

Digitized by Google

part in the affairs of the State. Marlborough was named a member of it, as we have seen. The Lords Justices ordered that all despatches addressed to the Secretary of State should be brought to them. Bolingbroke himself had to wait at the door of the Council Chamber with his despatch-box, to receive the commands of his new masters.

France, tired of war, recognised the new King of England. The coronation of the King took place on October 20; Bolingbroke and Oxford were both present. We learn from some of the journals of the day, that it had rained on the previous afternoon, and that many of the Jacobites promised themselves that the rain would continue to the next day, and so retard, if only for a few hours, the hateful ceremony. But their hopes of foul weather were disappointed. The rain did not keep on, and the coronation took place successfully in London; not, however, without some Jacobite disturbances in Bristol, Birmingham, Norwich, and other places.

The Government soon after issued a proclamation dissolving the existing Parliament, and another summoning a new one. The latter called on all the electors of the kingdom, in consequence of the evil designs of men disaffected to the King, 'to have a particular regard to such as showed a firmness to the Protestant Succession when it was in danger.' The appeal was clearly unconstitutional, according to our ideas, but it was made, probably, in answer to James Stuart's manifesto a few weeks before, in which the Pretender reasserted his claims to the throne, and

Digitized by Google

declared that he had only waited until the death 'of the Princess, our sister, of whose good intentions towards us we could not for some time past well doubt.'

The general elections showed an overwhelming majority for the Whigs. The not unnatural fluctuations of public opinion at such a time are effectively illustrated by the sudden and complete manner in which the majority was transferred; now to this side, now to that. Just at this moment, and indeed for long after, the Whigs had it all their own way. Only a few years ago their fortunes had seemed to have sunk to zero, and now they had mounted again to the zenith. The King opened Parliament in person. The Speech was read for him by the Lord Chancellor, for the very good reason that George could not pronounce English. That Speech declared that the established Constitution—Church and State—should be the rule of his government. The debate on the Address was remarkable. In the House of Lords the Address contained the words—'To recover the reputation of this kingdom.' Bolingbroke made his last speech in Parliament. He objected to these words, and proposed an amendment, with an eloquence and an energy worthy of his best days, and with a front as seemingly fearless as though his fortunes were at the full. He contended that to talk of 'recovering' the reputation of the kingdom was to cast a stigma on the glory of the late reign. He proposed to substitute the word 'maintain' for the word 'recover.' His amendment was defeated by

Digitized by Google

sixty-six votes to thirty-three; exactly two to one. In the House of Commons the Address, which was moved by Walpole, contained words still more significant. The Address spoke of the Pretender's attempts 'to stir up your Majesty's subjects to rebellion,' declared that his hopes 'were built upon the measures that had been taken for some time past in Great Britain,' and added: 'It shall be our business to trace out those measures whereon he placed his hopes, and to bring the authors of them to condign punishment.' These words were the first distinct intimation given by the Ministers that they intended to call their predecessors to account. Stanhope stated their resolve still more explicitly in the course of the debate. Bolingbroke sat and heard it announced that he and his late colleague were to be impeached for high treason. He put on an appearance of serenity and philosophic boldness for a time, but in his heart he had already taken fright. For a few days he went about in public, showing himself ostentatiously, with all the manner of a man who is happy in his unwonted ease, and is only anxious for relaxation and amusement. He professed to be rejoiced by his release from office, and those of his friends who wished to please him offered him their formal congratulations on his promotion to a retirement that placed him above the petty struggles and cares of political life. He visited Drury Lane Theatre on March 26, 1715, went about amongst his friends, chatted, flirted, paid compliments, received compliments, arranged to attend another performance

Digitized by Google

at the same theatre the following evening. That same night he disguised himself as a serving-man, slipped quietly down to Dover, escaped from thence to Calais, and went hurriedly on to Paris; ready to place himself, and his talents, and his influence—such as it might be—at the service of the Stuarts.

There seems good reason to believe that the Duke of Marlborough, by a master-stroke of treachery, avenged himself on Bolingbroke at this crisis in Bolingbroke's fortunes, and decided the flight to Paris. Bolingbroke sought out Marlborough, and appealing to the memories of their old friendship, begged for advice and assistance. Marlborough professed the utmost concern for Bolingbroke, and gave him to understand that it was agreed upon between the Ministers of the Crown and the Dutch Government that Bolingbroke was to be brought to the scaffold. Marlborough pretended to have certain knowledge of this, and he told Bolingbroke that his only chance was in flight. Bolingbroke fled, and thereby seemed to admit in advance all the accusations of his enemies and to abandon his friends to their mercy. One of Bolingbroke's biographers appears to consider that on the whole this was well done by Marlborough, and that it was only a fair retaliation on Bolingbroke. In any case, it is clear that Bolingbroke acted in strict consistency with the principles on which he had moulded his public and private life: he consulted for himself first of all. It may have been necessary for his own safety that he should fly from the threatening storm. It is certain that he had bitter and unrelent-

Digitized by Google

ing enemies. These would not have spared him if they could have made out a case against him. No one but Bolingbroke himself could know to the full how much of a case there was against him. But his flight, if it saved himself, might have been fatal to those who were in league with him for the return of the Stuarts. If he had stood firm, it is probable that his enemies would not have been able to prevail any farther against him than they were able to prevail in his absence against Harley, whom his flight so seriously compromised. Nobody needs to be told that the one last hope for conspirators whose plans are being discovered is for all in the plot to stand together or all to fly together. Bolingbroke does not seem to have given his associates any chance of considering the position and making up their minds.

A committee of secrecy was struck. It was composed of twenty-one members, and the hearts of Bolingbroke's friends may well have sunk within them as they studied the names upon its roll. Many of its members were conscientious Whigs—Whigs of conviction, eaten up with the zeal of their house, like James Stanhope himself, and Spencer Cowper and Lord Coningsby and young Lord Finch and Pulteney, now in his period of full devotion to Walpole. There were Whig lawyers, like Lechmere; there were steady, obtuse Whigs, like Edward Wortley Montagu, husband of the brilliant and beautiful woman whom Pope first loved and then hated. There was Aislabie, then Treasurer of the Navy, afterwards Chancellor of

Digitized by Google

the Exchequer, who came to disgrace at the bursting of the South Sea Bubble, and who would at any time have elected to go with the strongest, and loved to tread the path lighted by his own impressions as to his own interests. Thomas Pitt, grandfather to the great Chatham, the 'Governor Pitt' of Madras, whose diamonds were objects of admiration to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, was a member of the committee; and so was Sir Richard Onslow, afterwards Speaker of the House of Commons, and uncle of the much more celebrated 'Speaker Onslow.' From none of these men could Bolingbroke have much favour to expect. Those who were honest and unselfish would be ill-disposed towards him because of their honesty and unselfishness; those who were not exactly honest and certainly not unselfish, would, by reason of their character, probably be only too anxious to help the winning party to get rid of him. But the names that must have showed most formidable in the eyes of Bolingbroke and his friends were those of Robert Walpole and Richard Hampden. Two years before this time the persistent enmity of Bolingbroke had sent Walpole to the Tower, branded with the charge of corruption and expelled from the House of Commons. Now things are changed indeed. Walpole is chairman of the committee, and 'Hast thou found me, oh, mine enemy?' St. John had threatened Hampden, who was a lineal descendant of the Hampden of the Civil War, with the Tower for daring to censure the Ministry of the day, and was only deterred from carrying out his threat by prudent counsellors,

Digitized by Google

who showed him that Hampden would be only too proud to share Walpole's imprisonment. These were men not likely to forget or to forgive such injuries.

At first the Tories seem scarcely to have believed that the Whigs would push their policy to extremities. The eccentric Jacobite Shippen publicly scoffed at the committee, and declared in the House of Commons that its investigations would vanish into smoke. Such confidence was quickly and rudely shattered. June 9 saw a memorable scene. On that day Robert Walpole, as chairman of the Committee of Secrecy, rose and told the House of Commons that he had to present a report, but that he was commanded by the committee to move in the first instance that a warrant be issued by the Speaker to apprehend several persons who should be named by him, and that meantime no member be permitted to leave the House. Thereupon the lobbies were cleared of all strangers, and the Sergeant-at-arms stood at the door in order to prevent any member from going out. Then Walpole named Mr. Matthew Prior, Mr. Thomas Harley, and other persons, and the Speaker issued his warrant for their arrest. Mr. Prior was arrested at once ; Mr. Harley a few hours afterwards.

Prior was the poet, the friend and correspondent of Bolingbroke. He had been much engaged in the negotiations for the Treaty of Utrecht, and had at one time actually held the rank of English Envoy. He had but lately returned from Paris ; had arrived in London just before Bolingbroke's flight. Thomas Harley, cousin of Lord Oxford, had also been con-

Digitized by Google

cerned in the negotiations in a less formal and more underhand sort of way. When the arrests had been ordered Walpole informed the House that the Committee of Secrecy had agreed upon their report, and had commanded him to submit it to the House of Commons. The report, which Walpole himself, as chairman of the committee, had drawn up, was a document of great length; it occupied many hours in the reading. But the time could not have seemed tedious to those who listened. The report was an indictment and a State paper combined. It arrayed with the utmost skill all the evidences and arguments, all the facts and all the passages of correspondence, necessary to make out a case against the accused statesmen. It carried with it, beyond question, the complete historical condemnation of Oxford and Bolingbroke in all that related to the Treaty of Utrecht. Never was it more conclusively established for the historian that Ministers of State had used the basest means to bring about the basest objects. It was made clear as light that the national interests and the national honour had been sacrificed for partisan and for personal purposes. Objects in themselves criminal for statesmen to aim at had been sought by means which would have been shameful even if employed for justifiable ends. Had Bolingbroke and Oxford been endeavouring to save the State by the arts which they employed to sacrifice it, their conduct would have called for the condemnation of all honest men. But as regards the transactions with James Stuart there was ample ground shown for

Digitized by Google

suspicion, there was good reason to conjecture or to infer, but there was no positive evidence of intended treason. An historian reading over the report would in all probability come to the conclusion that Oxford and Bolingbroke had been plotting with James Stuart, but he would not see in it satisfactory grounds for an impeachment. No jury would convict on such evidence; no jury probably would even leave the box for the purpose of considering their verdict. In the course of the events that were soon to follow it was placed beyond any doubt that Bolingbroke and Oxford had all along been trying to arrange for the return of the Stuarts. They were not driven to throw themselves in despair into the Stuart cause by reason of harsh proceedings taken against them by their enemies in England; they had been 'pipe-laying,' to use an expressive American word, for the Stuart restoration during all the closing years of Queen Anne's reign. The reader must decide for himself as to the degree of moral or political guilt involved in such transactions. It has to be remembered that nearly half—some still say more than half—of the population of these countries was in favour of such a restoration, and that Anne herself unquestionably leaned to the same view. What is certain is that Oxford and Bolingbroke were planning for it. But what seems equally clear is that the report of the Secret Committee did not contain satisfactory evidence on which to sustain a charge of treason. Swift is not a trustworthy witness on these subjects, but he is quite right when he says that the allegations were 'more

Digitized by Google

proper materials to furnish out a pamphlet than an impeachment.'

Bolingbroke's friends must have felt deeply grieved at his flight when they heard the statement of the case against him. Even as regards the Treaty of Utrecht, it seems questionable whether the historical conviction assuredly obtained against him by the contents of the report would, in the existing condition of politics and parties, have been followed by any sort of judicial conviction, whether in a court of law or a trial by Parliament.

The day after the reading of the report gave Walpole his long desired revenge: he impeached Bolingbroke of high treason. There was a dead silence in the House when he had finished. Then two of Bolingbroke's friends, Mr. Hungerford and General Ross, mustered up courage to speak a few words for their lost leader. The star of the morning, the Tory Lucifer, had fallen indeed! Lord Coningsby got up and made a clever little set speech. Walpole had impeached the hand, and Lord Coningsby impeached the head; Walpole had impeached the clerk, and Coningsby impeached the justice; Walpole had impeached the scholar, and Coningsby impeached the master. This head, this justice, this master, was, of course, the Lord Oxford. As a piece of dramatic declamation Coningsby's impeachment was telling enough; as an historical presentation of the case against the two men it was absurd. Through all Anne's later years Oxford had been nothing and Bolingbroke everything. On the very eve of the Queen's death

Digitized by Google

Bolingbroke had secured his triumph over his former friend by driving Oxford out of all office. Had Oxford been first impeached and the speech of Lord Coningsby been aimed at Bolingbroke, it would have been strikingly appropriate; as it was, it became meaningless rhetoric. Next day Oxford went to the House of Lords, and tried to appear cool and unconcerned, but, according to a contemporary account, 'finding that most members avoided sitting near him, and that even the Earl Powlet was shy of exchanging a few words with him, he was dashed out of countenance, and retired out of the House.'

Impeachments were now the order of the day. The loyal Whigs of the Commons were incessantly passing between the Upper House and the Lower with articles of impeachment, and still further articles when the first were not found to be strong enough for the purpose. Stanhope impeached the Duke of Ormond; Aislabie impeached Lord Strafford—not of high treason, but of high crimes and misdemeanours; Strafford was accused of being not only 'the tool of a Frenchified ministry,' but the adviser of most pernicious measures. Strafford's part in the negotiations had not been one of any considerable importance. He had been sent as English Plenipotentiary to the Congress at Utrecht. Associated with him as Second Plenipotentiary was Dr. John Robinson, then Bishop of Bristol, and more lately made Bishop of London, the churchman on whom the office of the Privy Seal had been conferred by Harley, to the great anger of the Whigs. It was said that Strafford, in his high

Digitized by Google

and mighty way, had refused flatly to accept a mere poet like Prior for his official colleague. Strafford had, in reality, little or nothing to do with the making of the Treaty. The negotiations were carried on between Bolingbroke and the Marquis de Torcy, French Secretary of State and nephew of the great Colbert; and when these wanted agents they employed men more clever and less pompous than Strafford. Aislabie, in bringing on his motion, drew a curious distinction between Strafford and Strafford's official colleague. 'The good and pious Prelate,' he said, had been only a cipher, and 'seemed to have been put at the head of that negotiation only to palliate the iniquity of it under the sacredness of his character.' He was glad, therefore, that nothing could be charged upon the Bishop, and complacently observed that the course taken with regard to Dr. Robinson, who was not to be impeached, 'ought to convince the world that the Church was not in danger.' There was some wisdom as well as wit in a remark made thereupon by a member of the House in opposing the motion—'the Bishop, it seems, is to have the benefit of clergy.'

The motions for the impeachment of Bolingbroke and Oxford were carried without a division. This fact, however, would be little indication as to the result of an impeachment after a long trial, and after the minds of men had cooled down on both sides; when Whigs had grown less passionate in their hate, and Tories had recovered their courage to sustain their friends. Even at the moment the impeachment of the Duke of Ormond was a matter of far greater

Digitized by Google

difficulty. Ormond had many friends even among the most genuine supporters of the Hanoverian succession. He was the idol of the High Church party; at all events of the High Church mob. Had he acted with anything like a steady resolve he would, in all probability, have escaped even impeachment. To some of the most serious charges against him, his refusal, for instance, to attack the French while the secret negotiations for the Treaty of Utrecht were going on, he could fairly have pleaded that he had acted only as a soldier taking positive instructions and carrying them out. His clear and obvious policy would have been to take the quiet stand of a man conscious of innocence and therefore not afraid of the scrutiny of any committee or the judgment of any tribunal.

But Ormond hesitated. Ormond was always hesitating. Many of his influential supporters urged him to seek an audience of the King at once, and to profess to George his unfailing and incorruptible loyalty. Had he taken such a course it is not at all unlikely that the King might have caused the measures against him to be abandoned. Ormond's friends indeed were full of hope that they could, in any case, induce the Ministry not to persevere in the proceedings against him. On the other hand, he was urged to join in an insurrection in the West of England, towards which, beyond doubt, he had already himself taken some steps. The less cautious of his friends assured him that his appearance in the West would be welcomed with open arms, and would

Digitized by Google

bring a vast number of adherents round him, and that a powerful blow could be struck at once against the Hanoverian succession. Ormond, however, took neither the one course nor the other. To do him justice he was far too honourable for the utter perfidy of the first course, and it is doing him no injustice to say that he was too feeble for the daring enterprise of the second. It is believed that Ormond had an interview with Oxford before his flight, and that he urged Oxford to attempt an escape in terms not unlike those with which William the Silent in Goethe's play endeavours to persuade Egmont not to remain in the power of Philip the Second. Then Ormond himself fled to France. He lived there for thirty years after. He led a pleasant, easy, harmless life, and was completely forgotten in England for years and years before his death. More than twenty years after his flight he is described by vivacious Mary Wortley Montagu as 'one who seems to have forgotten every part of his past life, and to be of no party.' He was a weak man, with only a very faint outline of a character; but he was more honourable and consistent than was common with the men of his time. When he had once taken up a cause or a principle, he held to it. He was the very opposite to Bolingbroke. Bolingbroke was genius and force without principle. Ormond had principle without genius or force.

Two, then, of the great accused peers were beyond the reach of the House of Lords. Oxford alone remained. On July 9, 1715, articles of im-

Digitized by Google

peachment were brought up against him. The impeachment does not seem to have been very substantial in its character. The great majority of its articles referred to the conduct of Oxford with regard to the Treaty of Utrecht. One article accused him of having abused his influence over her Majesty by prevailing upon her to exercise 'in the most unprecedented and dangerous manner' her prerogative by the creation of twelve Peers in December 1711. A motion that Oxford be committed to the Tower was made, and on this motion he spoke a few words which were at once ingenious and dignified. He asserted his innocence of any treasonable practice or thought, and declared that what he had done was done in obedience to the positive orders of the Queen. He asked the House what might not happen if Ministers of State, acting on the immediate commands of their sovereign, were afterwards to be made accountable for their proceedings. Then in a few words he commended his cause to the justice of his brother peers, and took leave of the House of Lords, as he put it, 'perhaps for ever.' Such an impeachment would have been impossible in more recent days. If Oxford had been accused of treasonable dealings with the Stuarts, and if evidence could have been brought home to him, there indeed might have been a reasonable ground for impeachment. But there was no sufficient evidence for any such purpose, and to impeach a statesman simply because he had taken a political course which was afterwards disapproved by the nation, and which was discredited by results, was simply to say that

Digitized by Google

any failure in the policy of a Minister of the Crown might make him liable to impeachment when his enemies came into power. The Peace of Utrecht, bad as it was, had been condoned, or rather approved of, by two successive Parliaments. Shrewsbury, who was now in high favour, had been actively concerned in its promotion. It was a question of compromise altogether, on which politicians were entitled to form the strongest opinions. No doubt the enemies of the Tory party had ample ground for condemning and denouncing the Peace. But the part which a statesman had taken in bringing about the Peace could not, according to our modern ideas, form any just ground of ministerial impeachment. Much more reasonably might the statesmen of a later day have been impeached who, by their blundering and their obstinacy, brought about the armed resistance and the final independence of the North American colonies. It is curious, in our eyes, to find Oxford defending his conduct on the ground that he had simply obeyed the positive orders of his sovereign. The minister would run more risk of impeachment, in our days, who declared that he had acted in some great public crisis simply in obedience to his sovereign's orders, than if he were to stand accountable for the greatest errors, the grossest blunders, committed on the judgment and on the responsibility of himself and his colleagues.

Oxford was committed to the Tower, whither he went escorted by an immense popular procession of his admirers, who cheered vociferously for him and for

Digitized by Google

High Church together. He may now be said to drop out of our history altogether. He was destined to linger in long confinement, almost like one forgotten by friends and enemies. We shall have to tell afterwards how he petitioned for a trial, and was brought to trial, and in what fashion he came to be acquitted by his peers. The remainder of his life he passed in happy quietude among his books and curious manuscripts; the books and manuscripts which formed the original stock of the Harleian Library, afterwards completed by his son. Harley lived until 1724, and was not an old man even then—only sixty-three. It is not necessary that in this work we should concern ourselves much more about him. Despite all the praises of his friends, some of them men of the highest intellectual gifts, like Swift and Pope, there does not seem to have been any great quality, intellectual or moral, in Harley. He had a narrow and feeble mind; he was incapable of taking a large view of anything; he was selfish and deceitful; although it has to be said that sometimes that which men called deceit in him was but a lack of the capacity to look straight before him and make up his mind. He often led astray those who acted with him merely because his own confusion of intellect and want of defined purpose were leading himself astray. Perhaps the most dignified passage in his life was that which showed him calmly awaiting the worst in London, when men like Bolingbroke and Ormond had chosen to seek safety in flight. Yet even the course which he took in this instance seems to have

Digitized by Google

been rather the result of indecision than of independent self-sufficing courage and resolve. He does not appear to have been able to decide upon anything until the time had passed when movement of any kind would have availed, and so he remained where he was. Many a man has gained credit for courage, and has seemed to surround himself with dignity, because at a moment of alarm when others did this or that he was unable quite to make up his mind as to what he ought to do, and so did nothing, and let the world go by.

On September 17, Norroy King at Arms came solemnly down to the House of Lords, and razed the names of Ormond and of Bolingbroke from the roll of peers. Bolingbroke had some consolation of a sham kind. He had wished and schemed to be Earl of Bolingbroke before his fall, and now his new King, James of St. Germains, had given him the patent of enhanced nobility. If he ceased to be a viscount in the eyes of English peers and of English heralds, he was still an earl in the Pretender's court. Bolingbroke had too keen a sense of humour not to be painfully aware of the irony of the situation. Nor was he likely to find much satisfaction in the peerage which the Government had just conferred upon his father, Sir Henry St. John, by creating him Baron of Battersea and Viscount St. John. Sir Henry St. John was an idle, careless *roué*, a haunter of St. James's coffee-houses, living in the manner and in the memories of the Restoration, listlessly indifferent to all parties, leaning perhaps a little to the Whigs.

Digitized by Google

He had no manner of sympathy with his son or appreciation of his genius. When the son was made a peer the father only said, 'Well, Harry, I thought thee would be hanged, but now I see thee wilt be beheaded.' The father himself was once very near being hanged. In his wild youth he had killed a man in a quarrel, and was tried for murder and condemned to death, and then pardoned by the King, Charles II., in consideration it is said of a liberal money-payment to the merry monarch and his yet more merry mistresses.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VII.

THE WHITE COCKADE.

When Bolingbroke got to Paris he did not immediately attach himself to the service of James. Even then, and there, he still appears to have been undecided. In the modern American phrase, he 'sat on the fence' for a while. Probably, if he had seen even then a chance of returning with safety to England, if the impeachments had not been going on, and if any manner of overture had been made to him from London, he would forthwith have dropped the Jacobite cause, and returned to profess his loyalty to the reigning English sovereign. After a while, however, seeing that there was no chance for him at home, he went openly into the cause of the Stuarts, and accepted the office of Secretary of State to James. It must have been a trying position for a man of Bolingbroke's genius and ambition when he found himself thus compelled to put up with an empty office at a sham court. Bolingbroke's desire was to play on a great stage with a vast admiring audience. He loved the heat and passion of debate: he enjoyed his own rhetorical triumphs. He must have been chilled and cramped indeed in a situation which allowed him no opportunity of displaying his most

Digitized by Google

splendid and genuine qualities, while it constantly called on him for the exercise of the very qualities which he had least at hand. Nature had never meant him for a conspirator, or even for a subtle political intriguer; nor, indeed, had Nature ever intended him to be the adherent of a lost cause. All that could have made a position like his tolerable to a man of his peculiar capacity would have been faith in the cause—that faith which would have prevented him from seeing any but its noble and exalted qualities, and would have made him forget himself in its hopes, its perils, its triumphs, and its disasters. On the contrary, it would seem that Bolingbroke found it difficult to take the Stuart cause seriously, even when he was himself playing the part of its leading statesman. A critical observer writes from Paris in the early part of the year 1716, saying that he believed Bolingbroke's chief fault was 'that he could not play his part with a grave enough face; he could not help laughing now and then at such kings and queens.' Meantime, Bolingbroke amused himself in his moments of recreation after his old fashion. He indulged in amour after amour, intrigue after intrigue. Lord Chesterfield said of him, that 'though nobody spoke and wrote better upon philosophy than Lord Bolingbroke, no man in the world had less share of philosophy than himself. The least trifle, such as the over-roasting of a leg of mutton, would strangely disturb and ruffle his temper.' On the other hand, a glance from a pretty woman, or a glimpse of her ankle, would send all Bolingbroke's

Digitized by Google

political combinations and philosophical speculations flying into the air, and convert him in a moment from the statesman or the philosopher into the merest *petit-maître*, maccaroni, and gallant.

Louis the Fourteenth refused to give open assistance to the cause of the Stuarts, but he was willing enough to lend any help that he could in private to Bolingbroke and to them. His death was the first severe blow to the cause which Bolingbroke now represented. Louis the Fourteenth was, according to Bolingbroke himself, the best friend James then had. 'When I engaged,' says Bolingbroke, 'in this business, my principal dependence was on his personal character—my hopes sank as he declined, and died when he expired.' The Regent, Duke of Orleans, was a man who, with all his coarse and unrestricted dissipation, had some political capacity and even statesmanship. He saw that the Stuart was a sinking, the Hanoverian a rising cause. Even when the two seemed most nearly balanced it yet appeared to Orleans, if we may quote a phrase more often used in our days than in his, that the one cause was only half alive, but the other was half dead. Orleans, moreover, had a good deal of that feeling which was more strongly marked still in a Duke of Orleans of a later day. He had a liking for England and for English ways; he was, indeed, rather inclined to affect the political manners of an English statesman. He therefore leaned to the side of the Government established in England; and, at the urgent request of the English Ambassador in

Digitized by Google

Paris, he acted with some energy in preventing the sailing of vessels intended for the uses of an expedition to the English coast.

James Stuart seemed as if he were determined still further to imperil the chances of his family, and to embarrass his adherents. The right moment for a movement in his favour had been allowed to pass away, and now, with characteristic blundering and ill fortune, he seized upon the most unsuitable time that could possibly have been employed for such an attempt. Something might have been done perhaps, a temporary alteration in the dynasty might have been obtained, if energy and decision had been shown in that momentous interval when Queen Anne lay dying. But when that time had been allowed to pass the clear policy of the Pretender was to permit the fears of Englishmen to go to sleep for a while, to endeavour to reorganise his plans and his party; to wait until a certain reaction should set in, a reaction very likely to come about because of the apparent incapacity and the unattractive character of George the First, and then at some timely hour, with well-matured preparations, to strike an energetic blow. George the First was only a year on the throne when the adherents of James got up a miserable attempt at an insurrection.

There were three conditions under which, and under which alone, an insurrection just then would have had a reasonable chance of success. These conditions were fully recognised and understood by the Jacobite leaders in England, Scotland, and France.

Digitized by Google

The first was that a rising should take place at once in England and in Scotland, the second that the Chevalier in person should take the field, and the third that France should give positive assistance to the enterprise. The Jacobite cause was strong in the south-western counties of England, and there the influence of the Duke of Ormond was strong likewise. The general arrangement, therefore, in the minds of the Jacobite chiefs was that James Stuart should make his appearance in Scotland, that at the same moment the Duke of Ormond should raise the standard of revolt in some of the south-western counties, and that France should assist the expedition with men, money, and arms. When James, acting against the advice of his best counsellors, resolved on striking a blow at once, two of the necessary conditions were clearly wanting. France was not willing to give any actual assistance, and Ormond was not ready to raise the standard of rebellion in England.

Ormond's sudden appearance in Paris struck dismay into the hearts of the Jacobite counsellors, men and women, there. It had been distinctly understood that he was to remain in England, and that, if threatened with arrest, he was to hasten to one of the western counties, where he and his friends were strong, and strike a sudden blow. He was to seize Bristol, Exeter, Plymouth, and other towns, and set the Stuart flag flying all over that part of England. When he appeared in France, a mere solitary fugitive, all men of sense saw that the

Digitized by Google

game was up. Bolingbroke at once sent through safe hands a clear statement of the condition of things, to be laid before Lord Mar. Bolingbroke's object was to restrain Mar from any movement in the altered state of affairs. The letter, however, came too late. Mar had already made his movement towards the Highlands: there was no stopping the enterprise then—the rebellion had taken fire. James was determined more than ever to go. His arguments were the arguments of mere desperation. 'I cannot but see,' he wrote to Bolingbroke, 'that affairs grow daily worse and worse by delays, and that, as the business is now more difficult than it was six months ago, so these difficulties will, in all human appearance, rather increase than diminish. Violent diseases must have violent remedies, and to use none has, in some cases, the same effect as to use bad ones.' Indeed, it was impossible that the Chevalier himself or the Duke of Ormond could hold back. Both had personal courage quite enough for such an attempt. On the 28th of October James Stuart, after many delays, set out in disguise, and travelled westward to St. Malo. Ormond sailed from the coast of Normandy to that of Devonshire, but found there no sign of any arrangement for a rising. His plans had long been known to the English Government, and measures had been taken to frustrate them. In that little Jacobite Parliament sitting in Paris, which Bolingbroke spoke of with such contempt, and from which, as he puts it, 'no sex was excluded,' there was hardly any secret made

Digitized by Google

of the projects they were carrying on. Before the sudden appearance of Ormond in Paris they had counted, with the utmost confidence, on a full success, and were already talking of the Restoration as if it were an accomplished fact. Every word they uttered which it was of the least importance for the British Government to hear, was instantly made known to Lord Stair, the new English Ambassador—a resolute and capable man, a brilliant soldier, an astute and bold diplomatist, equal to any craft, ready for any emergency, charming to all, dear to his friends, very formidable to his enemies. Ormond found that, as he had let the favourable moment slip when he fled from England to France, there was now no means whatever of recalling the lost opportunity. He returned to Brittany, and there he found the Chevalier preparing to start for Scotland. After various goings and comings the Chevalier was at last enabled to embark at Dunkirk in a small vessel, with a few guns and half a dozen Jacobite officers to attend him, and he made for the Scottish coast.

About the same time, and as if in obedience to some word of command from France, there was a general and almost simultaneous outburst of Jacobite demonstration in England, amounting in most places to riot. In London, and all over England, so far as one can judge, the popular feeling appears to have been rather with the Jacobites than against them. Stout Jacobites toasted a mysterious person called Job, who had no connection with the prophet, but whose name contained the initial letters of James,

Digitized by Google

Ormond, and Bolingbroke; and 'Kit' was no less popular because it stood for 'King James III.'; while the mysterious symbolism of the 'Three B's' implied 'Best Born Briton,' and so the Chevalier de St. George. The Chevalier's birthday—the tenth of June—was celebrated with wild outbursts of enthusiasm in several places. Stuart-loving Oxford in especial made a brave show of its white roses. The Loyalists, who endeavoured to do a similar honour to the birthday of King George, were often violently assailed by mobs. In many places the windows of houses whose inmates refused to illuminate in honour of the Chevalier were broken; William the Third was burnt in effigy in various parts of London, and in many towns throughout the country. So serious at one period did the revulsion of Jacobite feeling appear to be, that it was thought necessary to form a camp in Hyde Park, and to bring together a large body of troops there. The Life Guards and Horse Grenadiers, three battalions of the Foot Guards, the Duke of Argyll's regiment, and several pieces of cannon were established in the camp. By a curious coincidence the troops were reviewed by King George, the Prince of Wales, and the Duke of Marlborough, on the 25th August, 1715, the very day on which, as we shall presently see, the Highland clans set up the standard of the Stuarts at Braemar, in Scotland. The camp had a certain amount of practical advantage in it, independently of its supposed political necessity—it made Hyde Park safe at night. Before the camp was established, and after it was broken up,

Digitized by Google

the Park appears to have been little better than Bagshot Heath or Hounslow Heath: it was the favourite parade ground of highway robbers and murderers. The soldiers themselves were occasionally suspected of playing the part of highwaymen. 'A man in those days,' says Scott, 'might have all the external appearance of a gentleman, and yet turn out to be a highwayman,' and 'the profession of the polite and accomplished adventurer who nicked you out of your money at White's, or bowled you out of it at Marybone, was often united with that of the professed ruffian who, on Bagshot Heath or Finchley Common, commanded his brother beau to stand and deliver.' 'Robbers, a fertile and alarming theme, filled up every vacancy, and the names of the Golden Farmer, the Flying Highwayman, Jack Needham, and other Beggar's Opera heroes, were familiar in our mouths as household words.' The revulsion of Jacobite feeling actually showed itself sometimes amongst the soldiers in the camp. Accounts published at the time tell us of men having been flogged and shot for wearing Jacobite emblems in their caps. Perhaps in mentioning this Hyde Park camp it may not be inappropriate to notice the fact that General Macartney, who had figured in a terrible tragedy in the Park two or three years before, returned to England, and obtained the favour of George by bringing over six thousand soldiers from Holland to assist the King. General Macartney was the man who had acted as second to Lord Mohun in the fatal duel in Hyde Park on the 15th November, 1712,

Digitized by Google

when both Mohun and the Duke of Hamilton were killed. Macartney escaped to Holland, and was charged by the Duke of Hamilton's second with having stabbed the Duke through the heart while Colonel Hamilton was endeavouring to raise him from the ground. Macartney came back and took his trial, but was only found guilty of manslaughter, that is to say, found guilty of having taken part in the duel, and escaped without punishment. Probably Macartney, and Hamilton, and Mohun, and the Duke are best remembered in our time because of the effect which that fatal meeting had upon the fortunes of Beatrix Esmond.

The insurrection had already broken out in Scotland. John Erskine, eleventh Earl of Mar, set himself up as lieutenant-general in the cause of the Chevalier. Lord Mar was a man of much courage and some capacity. He had held high office under Queen Anne. One of the biographers of that period describes Mar as a devoted adherent of the Stuarts. His career is indeed a fair illustration of the sort of thing which then sometimes passed for devoted adherence to a cause. When King George reached England, he dismissed Mar from office, suspecting him of sympathy with the Jacobite movement. Mar had expected something of the kind, and had written an obsequious and a grovelling letter to George, in which he spoke of the King's 'happy accession,' professed unbounded devotion to the House of Hanover, and promised that 'You shall ever find in me as faithful a subject as ever any king had.' The new

Digitized by Google

King, however, declined to trust to the faithfulness of this subject; and a year after, the faithful subject had returned to his Jacobite convictions, and was gathering the Highland clans in James Stuart's name.

The clans were got together at Braemar. The white cockade was mounted there by clan after clan; the Macintoshes being the first to display it as the emblem of the Stuart cause. Inverness was seized. King James was proclaimed at several places, notably at Dundee, by Graham, the brother of 'conquering Graham,' Bonnie Dundee, the fearless, cruel, clever Claverhouse who fell at Killiecrankie. Perth was secured. The force under Mar's leadership grew greater every day. He had begun with a handful of men. He had now a little army. He had set up his standard almost at haphazard at Braemar, and now nearly all the country north of the Tay was in the hands of the Jacobites.

The Duke of Argyll was put in command of the royal forces, and arrived in Scotland in the middle of September, 1715. He hastened to the camp, which had been got together somehow at Stirling. He came there almost literally alone. He brought no soldiers with him. He found few soldiers there to receive him. Under his command he had altogether about a thousand foot and half as many dragoons, the latter consisting in great measure of the famous and excellent Scots Greys. His prospect looked indeed very doubtful. He could expect little or no assistance from his own clan. They had work enough to do in guarding against a possible attack

Digitized by Google

from some of the followers of Lord Mar. Glasgow, Dumfries, and other towns were likewise in imminent danger from some of the Highland clans, and were kept in a continual agony of apprehension. It seemed likely enough that Argyll might soon be surrounded at Stirling. If Mar had only made a forward movement it is impossible to say what degree of success he might not have accomplished. It seems almost marvellous, when we look back and survey the state of things, to see what a miserable force the Government had to rely upon. In the whole country they had only about eight thousand men. They had more men abroad than at home, and in the critical condition of things which still prevailed upon the Continent, it did not seem clear that they could, except in the very last extremity, bring home many of the men whom they kept abroad. Of that little force of eight thousand soldiers they did not venture to send a considerable proportion up to the North. They had, perhaps, good reason. They did not know yet where the serious blow was to be struck for the Stuart cause. Many of George's counsellors still looked upon the movement in Scotland as something merely in the nature of a feint. They believed that the real blow would yet be struck by Ormond in the West of England.

But the evil fortune which hung over the Stuart cause in all its later days clung to it now. There was no conceivable reason why Mar should not have marched southward. The forces of the King were few in number, and were not well placed for the

Digitized by Google

purpose of making any considerable resistance. But in an enterprise like that of Mar all depends upon rapidity of movement. What we may call the ultimate resources of the country were in the hands of the King and his adherents. Every day's delay enabled them to grow stronger. Every day's delay beyond a certain time discouraged and weakened the invaders. Mar might, at one critical moment, have swept Argyll's exhausted troops before him, but he was feeble and timorous; he dallied; he let the time pass; he allowed Argyll to get away without making an effort to attack him. It was then that one of the Gordon clan broke into that memorable exclamation, 'Oh for one hour of Dundee!' —the exclamation which Byron has paraphrased in the line:

Oh for one hour of blind old Dandolo!

Certainly one hour of Dundee might at more than one crisis in this melancholy struggle have secured for the time the cause of the Stuarts, and won for James at least a temporary occupation of the throne of his ancestors. Mar's little force remained motionless long enough to allow the Duke of Argyll to get sufficient strength to make an attack upon it at Sheriffmuir. Sheriffmuir was not much of a victory. Each side, in fact, claimed the conqueror's honour. Mar was not annihilated, nor Argyll driven back. The Duke of Argyll probably lost more of his men, but, on the other hand, he captured many guns and standards, and he reappeared on the same field the next day, while Mar showed there no more. Tested

Digitized by Google

in the only practical way, it is clear that the Duke of Argyll had the better of it. Lord Mar wanted to do something, and was prevented from doing it at a time when to him everything depended on advance and on success. The Duke of Argyll successfully interposed between Mar and his object, and therefore was clearly the victor.

It is on record that no small share of Mar's ill-success was due to the action, or rather the inaction, of the famous Highland outlaw Rob Roy. He and his clan had joined Mar's standard, but his sympathies seem to have been with Argyll. He had an unusually large body of men under his command, for many of the clan Macpherson had been committed to his leadership, in consequence of the old age of their chief; but at a critical moment he refused to lead his men to the charge, and stood on a hill with his followers, unconcernedly surveying the fight. It is said that had he kept faith he could have turned the fortunes of the day.

Argyll and the cause he represented could afford to wait, and Mar could not. The insurrection already began to melt. James Stuart himself made his appearance in Scotland. He was characteristically late for Sheriffmuir, and when he did throw himself into the field he seemed unable to take any decisive step, or even to come to any clear decision. He did not succeed in making himself popular, even for the moment, among his followers in Scotland. The occasion was one in which gallant bearing and kingly demeanour would have gone for much, and indeed it

Digitized by Google

is not at all impossible that a leader of a different stamp from James might even then have so inspired the Highland clansmen, and so made use of his opportunity, as to overwhelm Argyll and the Hanoverian forces, and turn the whole crisis to his favour. But James was peculiarly unsuited to an enterprise of the kind. He had graceful manners, a mild, serene temper, and great power of application to work. His personal courage was undoubted, and he was willing enough to risk his own life on any chance; but he had none of the spirit of a commander. He was sometimes weak and sometimes obstinate. His very appearance was not in his favour among the Highland men, to whom he had previously been unknown. He was tall and thin, with pale face, and eyes that wanted fire and expression. His words were few, his behaviour always sedate and somewhat depressed. Here, among the Scottish clansmen on the verge of rebellion, he seemed utterly borne down by the greatness of the enterprise. He was wholly unable to infuse anything like spirit or hope into his followers. On the contrary, his appearance among them, when he did show himself, had a dispiriting and a depressing effect on almost every mind. Those who remember the manner and demeanour of the late Louis Napoleon, Emperor of the French, the silent shyness, the appearance of almost constant depression, which were characteristic of that sovereign, will, we think, be easily able to form a clear idea of the effect that James Stuart produced among his followers in Scotland. He did not care to see the soldiers exercise

Digitized by Google

and handle their arms. He avoided going among them as much as possible. The men at last began to feel a mistrust of his courage—the one great quality which he certainly did not lack. A feeling of something like contempt began to spread abroad. 'Can he speak at all?' some of the soldiers asked. He was all ice; his very kindness was freezing. A man like Dundee called to such an enterprise would have set the clans of Scotland aflame with enthusiasm. James Stuart was only a chilling and a dissolving influence. His more immediate military counsellors were like himself, and their only policy seemed to be one of postponement and delay. They advised him against action of every kind. The clansmen grew impatient. At Perth, one devoted Highland chief actually suggested that James should be taken away by force from his advisers, and brought amongst men who were ready to fight. 'If he is willing to die like a prince,' said this man, 'he will find there are ten thousand gentlemen in Scotland who are willing to die with him.' If James had followed the bent of his own disposition, he might even then have died like a prince, or gone on to a throne. His opponents were as little inclined for action as his own immediate advisers. The Duke of Argyll himself delayed making an advance until peremptory orders were sent to him from London. So long, and with so little excuse, did he delay, that statesmen in London suspected, not unreasonably, that Argyll was still willing to give James Stuart a chance, or was not yet quite certain whether the cause of the Stuarts was wholly lost.

Digitized by Google

It is characteristic of the time that so long as there seemed any possibility of James redeeming his crown Argyll's own colleagues suspected that Argyll was not willing to put himself personally in the way. At last, however, the peremptory order came that Argyll must advance upon Perth. The moment the advance became apparent, the counsellors of James Stuart insisted on retreat. On a day of ill omen to the Stuart cause, the 30th January, 1716, the anniversary of the day when Charles the First was executed, the retreat from Perth was resolved on. That retreat was the end of the enterprise. Many Jacobites had already made up their minds that the struggle was over, that there was nothing better to be done than to disperse before the advancing troops of King George, that the sooner the forces of James Stuart melted away and James Stuart himself got back to France, the better. James Stuart went back to France, and the clansmen returned to their homes. Some of the Roman Catholic gentlemen rose in Northumberland, and endeavoured to form a junction with a portion of Mar's force which had come southward to meet them. The English Jacobites, however, were defeated at Preston, and compelled to surrender. After a voyage of five days in a small vessel, James succeeded in reaching Gravelines safely on the 8th February, 1716. His whole expedition had not occupied him more than six weeks.

It was believed at the time that the counsels of the Duke of Marlborough were mainly instrumental in bringing about the prompt suppression of the

Digitized by Google

rebellion. Marlborough's advice was asked with regard to the military movements and dispositions to be made, and the belief of the day was that it was his counsel, and the manner in which the Government followed it out, which led to the utter overthrow of James Stuart and the dispersion of his followers. Marlborough is said to have actually told in advance the very time at which, if his advice were followed, the rebellion could be put down. Nothing is more likely than that Marlborough's advice should have been sought and should have been given. It would not in the least degree militate against the truth of the story that the outbreak took place so soon after Marlborough had been professing the most devoted attachment to the cause of the Stuarts, and had declared, as we have said already, that he would rather cut off his right hand than do anything to injure the claims of the Chevalier St. George. But it would not seem that any advice Marlborough might have given was followed out very strictly in the measures taken to put down the rebellion. We may be sure that Marlborough's would have been military counsel worthy of the greatest commander of his age. But in the measures taken to put down the rebellion we can see nothing but incapacity, vacillation, and even timidity. An energetic man in Argyll's position, seeing how James Stuart halted and fluctuated, must have made up his mind at once that a rapid and bold movement would finish the rebellion, and we find no such movement made, until at last the most peremptory orders from

Digitized by Google

London compelled Argyll at all hazards to advance. If then Marlborough gave his advice in London, which is very likely, it would seem that, for some reason or other, the advice was not followed by the commanders in the field. The whole story reminds one of the belief long entertained in France, and which we suppose has some votaries there even still, that the great success of the Duke of Wellington in the latter part of the war against Napoleon was due to the military counsels of Dumouriez, then an exile in London.

There was a plan for the capture of Edinburgh Castle, which, like other Stuart enterprises, would have been a great thing if it had only succeeded. Edinburgh Castle was then full of arms, stores, and money. Some eighty of the Jacobites, chiefly Highlanders, contrived a well-laid scheme by which to get possession of the Castle. They managed by bribes and promises to get over three soldiers in the Castle itself. The arrangement was that these men were to be furnished with ladders of a peculiar construction suited to the purpose, which, at a certain hour of the night, they were to lower down the Castle rock on the north side—the side looking on the Prince's Street of our day. By these ladders the assailants were quietly to ascend, and then overpower the little garrison, and possess themselves of the Castle. When the stroke had been done, they were to fire three cannon, and men stationed on the opposite coast of Fife were thereupon to light a beacon; and the flash of that light would be the

Digitized by Google

signal for other beacons from hill to hill to bear the news to Mar; as the lights along the Argive hills carried the tale of Troy's fall to Argos. The plan was an utter failure. It broke down in two places. One of the conspirators told his brother; the brother told his wife; the lady took alarm, and sent an anonymous letter disclosing the whole plot to the Lord Justice Clerk. Yet even then, had the conspirators been in time, their plan might have succeeded; for the anonymous letter did not reach its destination till an hour after the time appointed to make the attempt on the Castle. But the conspirators were not punctual. Some of them were in a tavern in Edinburgh, drinking to the success of their enterprise. Everyone in the neighbourhood seems to have known what their enterprise was, to have had some sympathy with it, to have talked freely about it. Eighteen of these heroes kept up their conviviality in the tavern till long after the appointed time. The hostess of the place was heard to say that they were powdering their hair to go to the attack on the Castle. 'A strange sort of powder,' Lord Stanhope remarks, 'to provide on such an occasion.' Lord Stanhope evidently takes the hostess's words in a literal sense, and believes that the lady really meant to say that the jovial conspirators were actually powdering their locks as if for a ball. We may assume that the hostess spoke as Hamlet did, 'tropically.' Whether she did or not—whether they were really adorning their locks, or simply draining the flagon—the result was all

Digitized by Google

the same. They came too late; the plot was discovered; the sympathising soldiers from the Castle were already under arrest. The conspirators had to disperse and fly; few of them were arrested; their neighbours were only too willing to help them to escape. It cannot be doubted that there was sympathy enough in Edinburgh to have made their plan the beginning of a complete success—if it had only itself been allowed to succeed. But the disclosure to the lady, and the powder for the hair, brought all to nothing. The whole story might almost be said to be an allegorical illustration of the fortunes of the Stuarts. The pint and the petticoat always came in the way of a success to that cause.

When James reached Gravelines, he hurried on to St. Germains. There, the next morning, Bolingbroke came to see him. Bolingbroke, to do him justice, had done all in his power to dissuade James from making his fatal expedition at such a time, and under such untoward circumstances. He had shown judgment, prudence, and, in the true sense, courage. He had shown himself a statesman. He might very well have met James in the mood and with the remonstrances of the counsellors who, after the event, are able to say, 'I told you so.' But Bolingbroke appears to have had more discretion and more manliness. He advised James to withdraw once again from the dominions of the King, and take refuge in Lorraine. Bolingbroke knew well, by this time, that there was not the slightest chance of any open assistance from the French Court; and even

Digitized by Google

that the French Court would be only too ready to throw James over, and sacrifice him, if, by doing so, they could strengthen the bonds of good feeling between France and England. James professed to take Bolingbroke's counsel in very friendly fashion, and parted from Bolingbroke with many expressions of confidence and affection. Yet it is certain that at this time he had made up his mind not to see Bolingbroke any more. He went for a time to a house near Versailles, a kind of head-quarters of intriguing political women, and thence immediately despatched a letter to Bolingbroke, relieving him of all his duties as Secretary of State. Bolingbroke affects to have taken his dismissal very composedly, but it cannot be doubted that his heart burnt within him at what he, doubtless, believed to be the ingratitude of the prince for whom he had done and sacrificed so much. For Bolingbroke had that unlucky gift of fancy which enables a man to see himself, and his own doings, and his own merits, in whatever light is most gratifying to his personal vanity. He had, in truth, never risked or sacrificed anything for the sake of James, or the Stuart cause. He never had the least idea of risking or sacrificing anything for that cause, or for any other. It was only when his fortunes in England became desperate, when impeachment, and, as he believed, a scaffold, threatened him, when he had no apparent alternative left but to join the Pretender or stay at home and lose all—it was only then that he took any decided step as an adherent of the cause of the Stuarts. We cannot

Digitized by Google

doubt that James Stuart knew to the full the part that Bolingbroke had played. He knew that he owed Bolingbroke no favour, and that he could have no confidence in him. Still it remains to the present hour a mystery why James should then, and in that manner, have got rid of Bolingbroke for ever. Bolingbroke himself does not appear to have known the cause of his dismissal. It may be that James had grown tired of the whole fruitless struggle, and was glad to get rid of a minister whose restless energy and genius would always have kept political intrigue alive, and political enterprises going. Or it may be that just then there had fallen into James's hands some new and recent evidences of Bolingbroke's willingness to treat, on occasion, with either side. However this may be, James made up his mind to dismiss his great follower, and Bolingbroke at once made up his mind to endeavour to ingratiate himself into the favour of the House of Hanover, and to secure his restoration to London society. Almost at the very moment of his dismissal, he made application to some of his friends in London to endeavour to obtain for him a permission to return.

We do not absolutely say a farewell to Bolingbroke now and here, as he stands dismissed from the service of the Stuarts and disqualified for the service of the Hanoverians. Nearly forty years of life were yet before him; but his work as a statesman was done. Never again had his genius a chance of shining in the service of a throne. The master-politician of

Digitized by Google

the age was out of employment for ever. We do not know if history anywhere supplies such another example of a great political career snapped off so suddenly at its midst, hardly even at its midst, and never put together again. Bolingbroke reappeared again and again in England. He even took more than once a certain kind of part in politics; that is in pamphleteering; he tried to be the inspiration and the guiding star of Pulteney and other rising men who had come, for one reason or another, to detest Walpole. But even these soon began to find Bolingbroke rather more of a hindrance than a help, and were glad to shake him off and be rid of him. He becomes everything by turns: plays at cool philosophy and philosophic retreat; is always assuring the world in tones of highly suspicious eagerness that he is done for ever with it and its works and pomps; and he is always yearning and striving to get back to the works and pomps again. He plays at farming, actually puts on countrified manners, and dines ostentatiously off homely farmer-like fare, to the amusement of some of his friends. He undertakes to settle the whole question of religion, of this world and the next, including the entire code of human ethics; and at the same time he is very fond of expatiating to young men concerning the most effective ways for the seduction of women, the course to be followed with a lady of quality, the different course in dealing with an actress, the policy of a long siege, and the policy of an attack by storm. He marries again and gets money with his wife, a

Digitized by Google

French *marquise*, once beautiful, somewhat older than himself, and seems to be fond of her and happy with her, and discourses to her, as to others, about the variety of his successful amours. Through long long years his shadow, his ghost—for in the political sense it is nothing else—keeps revisiting the glimpses of the moon in England. For all the influence he is destined to have on the realities of political life, he might as well be already lying in that tomb in the old church on the edge of the Thames at Battersea where his strangely brilliant, strangely blighted career is to come to an end at last.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VIII.

AFTER THE REBELLION.

All this time the Jacobite demonstrations were still going on in London and in various parts of England with as much energy as ever. Green boughs and oak apples were worn, and even flaunted, about the streets, by groups of persons on May 29, the anniversary of Charles the Second's restoration. We read of the riots in London, of Whigs of the 'Loyal Society' going about with little warming pans as emblems of their hostility to the Stuart cause, and being met by other mobs bearing white roses as badges of the Stuart cause. There was a continual battle of pamphleteers and of ballad writers. 'High Church and Ormond!' were shouted for and sung on one side of the political field, and the 'Pope and Perkin,' that is to say, James Stuart, were as liberally denounced on the other. The scandals about King George's mistresses were freely alluded to in the Jacobite songs. The public of all parties seem to have very cordially detested the ill-favoured ladies whom George had brought over from Hanover. The coarsest and grossest abuse was poured forth in ballads and in pamphlets against the King's favourites

Digitized by Google

and courtiers, and was sung and shouted day and night in the public streets.

Then, and for long after, these public streets were battle grounds on which Whigs and Tories, Hanoverians and Jacobites, fought out their quarrel. Men carried turnips in their hats in mockery of the German elector who had threatened to make St. James's Park a turnip field, and were prepared to fight lustily for their bucolic emblem. Women fanned the strife, wore white roses for the King over the water, or Sweet William in compliment to the 'immortal memory' of William of Nassau. Sometimes even women were roughly treated. On one occasion we read of a serving girl, who had made known the hiding-place of a Jacobite, being attacked and nearly murdered by a Jacobite mob, and rescued by some Whig gentlemen. On another occasion, a Whig gentleman seeing a young lady in the street with a white rose in her bosom, jumped from his coach, tore out the disloyal blossom, lashed the young lady with his whip, and handed her over to a gang of Whigs, who would have stripped and scourged her but for the timely appearance of some Jacobite gentry, by whom she was carried home in safety. The 'Flying Post' warns all 'he-Jacobites' and 'she-Jacobites' that if they are not careful they will meet with more severe treatment than hitherto, and then alludes to some pretty severe treatment the poor 'she-Jacobites' had already received.

To do the King and his family justice, they behaved with courage and composure through this long

Digitized by Google

season of popular excitement. They went everywhere as they pleased, braving the dangers that certainly existed. Once a man named Moor spat in the face of the Princess of Wales as she was going through the streets, and he was scourged till he cried 'God bless King George!' In 1718 a youth named Sheppard was hanged for planning King George's death. This led a Hanoverian fanatic named Bowes to suggest to the ministry that in return he should go to Italy and kill King James. His proffer of political retaliation only resulted in his being shut up as a madman. At last the temper of the times and the frequent threats of assassination compelled the King to take more care of himself. Though he walked in Kensington Gardens every day, the gardens were first searched, and then carefully watched by soldiers.

When the rebellion was over, the Government found they had a large number of prisoners on their hands, many of them of high rank. Several officers taken on the field had already been treated as deserters and shot, after a trial by drum-head court-martial. Some of the prisoners of higher rank were brought into London in a manner like that of captives dragged along in an old Roman triumph, or like that of actual convicts taken to Tyburn. They were marched in procession from Highgate through London, each man sitting on a horse, having his arms tied with cords behind his back, the horses led by soldiers, with a military escort drumming and fifing a march of triumph. The men of noble rank were confined in the Tower; others, many of them men of position,

Digitized by Google

such as Mr. Thomas Forster, a Northumberland gentleman, and member for his county, were thrust into Newgate, whose horrors have been so well described in Scott's 'Rob Roy.' The Rev. Robert Patten, who had been a conspicuous Jacobite, played a Titus Oates part in betraying his companions, and his name figures for King's evidence incessantly in the political trials. When he tired of treachery he retired to the obscurity of his parish of Allendale, in Northumberland, and gave the world his history of the rebellion in which he had played so base a part.

Amongst the chief prisoners were Lord Widdrington, the Earl of Nithisdale, the Earl of Wintoun, the Earl of Carnwath, the Earl of Derwentwater, Viscount Kenmure, and Lord Nairn. These noblemen were impeached before the House of Lords, and all, except Lord Wintoun, pleaded guilty, and prayed for the mercy of the King. Every effort was made to obtain a pardon for some of the condemned noblemen. Women of rank and beauty implored the King's mercy. Audacious attempts were made to bribe the ministers. Some eminent members of the Whig party in the House of Commons spoke up manfully and courageously in favour of a policy of mercy. It is something pleasant to recollect that Sir Richard Steele, who had got into Parliament again, was conspicuous amongst these. In the House of Lords the friends of the condemned men succeeded in carrying, despite the strong resistance of the Government, a motion for an address to the King, beseeching him to extend mercy to the noblemen in prison. Wal-

Digitized by Google

pole himself had spoken very harshly in the House of Commons, and condemned in unmeasured terms those of his party—the Whig party—who could be so unworthy as, without blushing, to open their mouths in favour of rebels and parricides, and he had carried an adjournment of the House of Commons from the 22nd of February to the 1st of March, in order to prevent any further petitions in favour of the rebel lords from being presented before the day fixed for their execution. One of these petitions, it is worth while recollecting, was presented by the kindly hand and supported by the manly voice of Sir Richard Steele. The ministers returned a merely formal answer on the King's behalf to the address, but they thought it wise to recommend a respite to be given to Lord Nairn, the Earl of Carnwath, and Lord Widdrington; and in order to get rid of any further appeals for mercy, they resolved that the execution of Lord Nithisdale, Lord Derwentwater, and Lord Kenmure should take place the very next day. Lord Nithisdale, however, was lucky enough to make his escape, somewhat after the fashion in which Lavalette, at a much later date, contrived to get out of prison, by the courage, devotion, and ingenuity of his wife. It is a curious fact that most of the contemporaries of Nithisdale who tell the story of his escape have represented his mother, and not his wife, as the woman who took his place in prison, and to whose energy and adroitness he owed his life. Smollett is one of those who give this version as if there were no doubt about it. Lord Stanhope, in the first edition of his 'History

Digitized by Google

of England, from the Peace of Utrecht to the Peace of Versailles,' accepted the story on authorities which seemed so trustworthy. Lord Stanhope knew that many modern writers had described the escape as being effected by Lord Nithisdale's wife, but he assumed that 'the name of the wife was substituted in later tradition as being more romantic.' A letter from Lady Nithisdale herself, written to her sister, settles the whole question, and of course Lord Stanhope immediately adopted this genuine version. Lady Nithisdale tells how at first she endeavoured to present a petition to the King. The first day she heard that the King was to go to the drawing-room, she dressed herself in black, as if in mourning, and had a lady to accompany her, because she did not know the King personally, and might have mistaken some other man for him. This lady and another came with her, and the three remained in the room between the King's apartments and the drawing-room. When George was passing through 'I threw myself at his feet, and told him in French that I was the unfortunate Countess of Nithisdale. . . . . Perceiving that he wanted to go off without receiving my petition, I caught hold of the skirt of his coat that he might stop and hear me. He endeavoured to escape out of my hands, but I kept such strong hold that he dragged me upon my knees from the middle of the room to the very door of the drawing-room.' One of the attendants of the King caught the unfortunate lady round the waist, while another dragged the King's coat skirt out of her hands. 'The petition,

Digitized by Google

which I had endeavoured to thrust into his pocket, fell down in the scuffle, and I almost fainted away through grief and disappointment.' Seldom, perhaps, in the history of royalty, is there a description of so ungracious, unkingly, and even brutal reception of a petition presented by a distracted wife praying for a pardon to her husband.

Then Lady Nithisdale determined to effect her husband's escape. She communicated her design to a Mrs. Mills, and took another lady with her also. This lady was of tall and slender make, and she carried under her own riding-hood one that Lady Nithisdale had prepared for Mrs. Mills, as Mrs. Mills was to lend hers to Lord Nithisdale, so that in going out he might be taken for her. Mrs. Mills was also 'not only of the same height, but nearly of the same size as my lord.' On their arrival at the Tower, Mrs. Morgan was allowed to go in with Lady Nithisdale. Only one at a time could be introduced by the lady. She left the riding-hood and other things behind her. Then Lady Nithisdale went downstairs to meet Mrs. Mills, who held her handkerchief to her face, 'as was very natural for a woman to do when she was going to bid her last farewell to a friend on the eve of his execution. I had indeed desired her to do it, that my lord might go out in the same manner.' Mrs. Mills' eyebrows were a light colour, and Lord Nithisdale's were dark and thick. 'So,' says Lady Nithisdale, 'I had prepared some paint of the colour of hers to disguise his with. I also bought an artificial headdress of the same colour

Digitized by Google

as hers, and I painted his face with white, and his cheeks with rouge to hide his long beard, which he had not time to shave. All this provision I had before left in the Tower. The poor guards, whom my slight liberality the day before had endeared me to, let me go quietly with my company, and were not so strictly on the watch as they usually had been, and the more so as they were persuaded, from what I had told them the day before, that the prisoners would obtain their pardon.' Then Mrs. Mills was taken into the room with Lord Nithisdale, and rather ostentatiously led by Lady Nithisdale past several sentinels, and through a group of soldiers, and of the guards' wives and daughters. When she got into Lord Nithisdale's presence she took off her riding-hood, and put on that which Mrs. Morgan had brought for her. Then Lady Nithisdale dismissed her, and took care that she should not go out weeping as she had come in, in order, of course, that Lord Nithisdale, when he went out, 'might the better pass for the lady who came in crying and afflicted.' When Mrs. Mills was gone, Lady Nithisdale dressed up her husband 'in all my petticoats excepting one.' Then she found that it was growing dark, and was afraid that the light of the candles might betray her. She therefore went out, leading the disguised nobleman by the hand, he holding his handkerchief pressed to his eyes, as Mrs. Mills had done when she came in. The guards opened the doors, and Lady Nithisdale went down-stairs with him. 'As soon as he had cleared the door I made him walk before me for fear the sentinels

Digitized by Google

should take notice of his walk.' Some friends received Lord Nithisdale, and conducted him to a place of security. Lady Nithisdale went back to her husband's prison, and 'When I was in the room I talked to him as if he had been really present, and answered my own questions in my lord's voice as nearly as I could imitate it. I walked up and down as if we were conversing together, till I thought they had time enough to clear themselves of the guards. I then thought proper to make off also. I opened the door, and stood half in it, that those in the outward chamber might hear what I said, but held it so close that they could not look in. 'I bid my lord a formal farewell for that night,' and she added some words about the petition for his pardon, and told him, 'I flattered myself that I should bring favourable news.' Then she closed the door with some force behind her, and 'I said to the servant as I passed by'—who was ignorant of the whole transaction—'that he need not carry any candles to his master till my lord sent for him, as he desired to finish some prayers first. I went downstairs and called a coach, as there were several on the stand. I drove home to my lodgings.' Soon after Lady Nithisdale was taken to the place of security where her husband was remaining. They took refuge at the Venetian ambassador's two or three days after. Lord Nithisdale put on a livery, and went in the retinue of the ambassador to Dover. The ambassador, it should be said, knew nothing about the matter, but his coach and six went to Dover to meet his brother; and it was one of the servants of

Digitized by Google

the embassy who acted in combination with Lord and Lady Nithisdale. A small vessel was hired at Dover, and Lord Nithisdale escaped to Calais, where his wife shortly after joined him. It is said by nearly all contemporary writers that King George, when he heard of the escape, took it very good-humouredly, and even expressed entire satisfaction with it. Lady Nithisdale does not seem to have believed this story of George's generosity. The statement made to her was that 'when the news was brought to the King he flew into an excess of passion, and said he was betrayed, for it could not have been done without some confederacy. He instantly despatched two persons to the Tower to see that the other prisoners were well secured.'

Lord Derwentwater and Lord Kenmure were executed on Tower Hill on the 24th February. The young and gallant Derwentwater declared on the scaffold that he withdrew his plea of guilty, and that he acknowledged no one but James Stuart as his king. Kenmure, too, protested his repentance at having, even formally, pleaded guilty, and declared that he died with a prayer for James Stuart. Lord Wintoun was not tried until the next month. He was a poor and feeble creature, hardly sound in his mind. 'Not perfect in his intellectuals,' a writer in a journal of the day observed of him. He was found guilty, but afterwards succeeded in making his escape from the Tower. Like Lord Nithisdale, he made his way to the Continent; and, like Lord Nithisdale, he died long after at Rome.

Digitized by Google

Humbler Jacobites could escape too. Forster escaped from Newgate, through the aid of a clever servant, and got off to France, while the angry Whigs hinted at connivance on the part of persons in high places. The redoubted Brigadier Mackintosh, who figures in descriptions of the time as a 'beetle-browed, grey-eyed' man of sixty, speaking 'broad Scotch,' succeeded in escaping, together with his son and seven others, in a rush of prisoners from the Newgate press-yard. Mr. Charles Radcliffe had an even stranger escape; for one day, growing tired, as well he might, of prison life, he simply walked out of Newgate under the eyes of his gaolers in the easy disguise of a morning suit and a brown tye-wig. Once some Jacobite prisoners, who were being sent to the West Indian plantations, rose against the crew, seized the ship, steered it to France, and quietly settled down there. Later still some prisoners got out even more easily. Brigadier Mackintosh's brother was discharged from Newgate on his own prayer, and on showing that 'he was very old, and altogether friendless.'

Immediately after the execution of the rebel noblemen the ministry set to work to take some steps which might render political intrigue and conspiracy less dangerous in the future. One idea which especially commended itself to the statesmen of that time was to make the laws more rigorous against Roman Catholics. Law and popular feeling were already strongly set against the Catholics. On the death of Queen Anne, officers in the army when informing their companies of the accession of the Elector of Hanover,

Digitized by Google

carried their loyal and religious enthusiasm so far as to call upon any of their hearers who might be Catholics to fall forthwith out of the ranks. The writers who supported the Hanoverian succession, and were in the service of the Whig ministry, were not ashamed to declare that the ceremony of the Paternoster would infallibly cure a stranger of the spleen, and that any man in his senses would find excellent comedy in the recital of an Ave Mary. 'How common it is,' says the writer of the 'Patriot,' 'to find a wretch of this persuasion to be deluded to such a degree that he shall imagine himself engaged in the solemnity of devotion, while in reality he is exceeding the fopperies of a Jack-pudding!' So great was the distrust of Catholics, that it was often the practice to seize upon the horses of Catholic gentlemen in order to impede them in the risings which they were always supposed to be meditating. But the condition of the Catholics in England was not bad enough to content the ministry. An Act was passed, in fact what would now be called 'rushed,' through Parliament, to 'strengthen the Protestant interest in Great Britain,' by making more severe 'the laws now in being against Papists,' and by providing a more effective and exemplary punishment for persons who, being Papists, should venture to enlist in the service of his Majesty.

The spirit of political freedom, as we now understand it, had not yet even begun to glimmer upon the counsels of statesmen. The idea had not yet arisen in the minds of Englishmen—even of men as able

Digitized by Google

as Walpole—that liberty meant anything more than liberty for the expression of one's own opinions, and for the carrying into action of one's own policy. Those who were in power immediately made it their business to strengthen their own hands, and to prevent, as far as possible, the growth of opinions, the expression of ideas, unfavourable to themselves. Yet at such a time there were not wanting advocates of the administration to write that it was 'indeed the peculiar happiness and glory of an Englishman that he must first quit these kingdoms before he can experimentally know the want of public liberty.' Most people, even still, read history by the light of ideas which prevailed up to the close of George the First's reign. We are all ready enough to admit that in our time it would not be a free system which suppressed or prevented the expression of other men's opinions, or which attached any manner of penal consequence to the profession of one creed or the adhesion to one party. But most of us are, nevertheless, ready enough to describe one period of English history, the reign perhaps of one sovereign, as a period of religious liberty, and another season, or reign, as a time when liberty was suppressed. Some Englishmen talk with enthusiasm of the spirit of Elizabeth's reign, or the spirit of the reign of William the Third, and condemn, in unmeasured terms, the spirit which influenced James the Second, and which would no doubt have influenced James the Second's son, if he had come to the throne. But anyone who will put aside for the moment his own particular opinions will see that in both cases

Digitized by Google

the guiding principle was exactly the same. Never were there greater acts of political and religious intolerance committed than during the reign of Elizabeth and during the reign of William the Third. The truth is that the modern idea of constitutional and political liberty did not exist among English statesmen, even so recently as the reign of William the Third. At the period with which we are now dealing it would not have occurred to any statesman that there could be a wiser course to take than to follow up the suppression of the insurrection of 1715 by making more stringent than ever the laws already in existence against the religion to which most of the rebels belonged.

The Government made another change of a different kind, and for which there was better political justification. They passed a measure altering the period of the duration of parliaments. At this time the limit of the existence of a parliament was three years. An Act was passed in 1641 directing that Parliament should meet once at least in every three years. This Act was repealed in 1664. Another, and a different kind of Triennial Parliament Bill, passed in 1694. This Act declared that no parliament should last for a longer period than three years. But the system of short parliaments had not apparently been found to work with much satisfaction. The impression that a House of Commons with so limited a period of life before it would be more anxious to conciliate the confidence and respect of the constituencies had not been justified in practice. Indeed,

Digitized by Google

the constituencies themselves at that time were not sufficiently awake to the meaning and the value of Parliamentary representation to think of keeping any effective control over those whom they sent to speak for them in Parliament. Bribery and corruption were as rife and as extravagant under the triennial system as ever they had been before, or as they ever were since. But no doubt the immediate object of repealing the Triennial Bill was to obtain a better chance for the new condition of things by giving it a certain time to work in security. If the new dynasty was to have any chance of success at all, it was necessary that ministers should not have to come almost immediately before the country again.

Shippen in the Commons and Atterbury in the Lords were among the most strenuous opponents of the new measure. Both staunch Jacobites, they had everything to gain just then by frequent appeals to the country. Shippen urged that it was unconstitutional in a Parliament elected for three years to elect itself for seven years without an appeal to the constituencies. Steele defended the Bill on the ground that all the mischiefs which could be brought under the Septennial Act could be perpetrated under the Triennial, but that the good which might be compassed under the Septennial could not be hoped for under the Triennial. Not a few persons in both Houses seemed to be of one mind with the bewildered Bishop of London, who declared that he did not know which way to vote, for 'he was confounded between dangers and inconveniences on one side and destruc-

Digitized by Google

tion on the other.' It is not out of place to mention here that when a Bill was unsuccessfully brought in nearly twenty years after for the Repeal of the Septennial Act, many of those who had voted in favour of parliaments of seven years in 1716 voted the other way, while opponents in 1716 were turned into allies in 1734.

The system of short parliaments has ardent admirers in our own day. 'Annual Parliaments' formed one of the points of the People's Charter. Many who would not accept the Chartist idea of annual parliaments would still regard as one of the articles of the true creed of Liberalism the principle of the triennial parliament. But even if that creed were true in the politics of the present day, it would not have been true in the early days of King George. One of the great constitutional changes which the times were then making, and which Walpole welcomed and helped to carry out, was the change which gave to the House of Commons the real ruling power in the Constitution. No representative chamber could then have held its own against the House of Lords, or the Court, or the Court and the House of Lords combined, if it had been subject to the necessity of frequent re-elections. Short parliaments have even in our own days been made in Europe the most effective weapons of despotic power. No test more trying can be found for a party of men sincerely anxious to maintain constitutional rights at a season of danger than to subject them to frequent and close electoral struggles. Much more important in the historical and constitutional sense

Digitized by Google

was it at the opening of King George's reign that the House of Commons should be strengthened than that any particular party should have unlimited opportunities of trying its chances at a general election. It mattered little, when once the position of the representative body had been made secure, whether George or James sat on the throne. With the representative body an inconsiderable factor in the State system, Brunswick would soon have been as unconstitutional as Stuart.

One of the last acts of the life of Lord Somers was to express to Lord Townshend his approval of the principle of the Septennial Bill. He did not live to see it actually passed into law. He was but sixty-six years old at the time of his death. Disease and not age had weakened his fine intellect, and had kept him for many years from playing any important part in the affairs of the State. The day when Somers died was the very day when the Septennial Bill passed its third reading in the House of Commons. It had come down from the House of Lords, and had to go back to that House, in consequence of some alterations made in the Commons. Somers lived just long enough to be assured of its safety. Born in 1650, the son of a Worcester attorney, he had won for himself the proudest honours of the law, and had written his name high up in the roll of English statesmen. Steele wrote of him that he was 'as much admired for his universal knowledge of men and things as for his eloquence, courage, and integrity in the exerting of such extraordinary talents.' The 'Spec-

Digitized by Google

tator,' in dedicating its earliest papers to him, spoke of him as one who brought into the service of his sovereign the arts and policies of ancient Greece and Rome, and praised him for a certain dignity in himself which made him appear as great in private life as in the most important offices he had borne. It was in allusion to Somers, indeed, that Swift said Bolingbroke wanted for success 'a small infusion of the alderman.' This was a sneer at Somers, as well as a sort of rebuke to Bolingbroke. If the 'small infusion of the alderman' was another term for order and method in public business, then it may be freely admitted by his greatest admirers that Somers had more of the alderman in his nature than Bolingbroke. Perhaps the only thing, except great capacity, which he had in common with Bolingbroke was an ungoverned admiration of the charms of women. His fame was first established by the ability with which he conducted his part of the defence of the seven bishops in James the Second's reign. His consistent devotion to the Whig party, and his just and almost prescient appreciation of the true principles of that party, set him in sharp contrast to other statesmen of the time—to men like Marlborough, and Shrewsbury, and Bolingbroke. His is a noble figure, even in its decay, and the historian of such a time parts from him with regret, feeling that the average of public manhood and virtue is lowered when Somers is gone.

While Jacobites were lingering in prison and dying on Tower Hill, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu was writing from abroad imperishable letters to her

Digitized by Google

friends. We may turn away from politics for a moment to observe her and her career. Mr. Wortley Montagu had been appointed Ambassador to Constantinople, and had set out for his post, accompanied by the witty and beautiful wife for whom he cared so little. Ever since he first met her and presented her with a copy of 'Quintus Curtius,' in honour of her Latinity, and some original verses of his own, in earnest of his admiration, he had been an exacting, impatient lover. After his marriage he seems to have grown absolutely indifferent to her, leaving her alone for months together while he remained in town, and pleading as his excuse his Parliamentary duties. She, who, on the contrary, had made no unreasonable display of affection for the lover, appears to have become deeply attached to the husband, and to have been bitterly pained by his careless indifference, an indifference which at last, and it would appear most unwillingly, she learned to return. When this life had been lived for a year or two Queen Anne died, and with Walpole's accession to power Mr. Wortley got office, and brought his beautiful wife up from Yorkshire to be the wonder and admiration of the English Court and the Hanoverian monarch. For two bright years Lady Mary shone like a star in the brilliant constellation of women, of wits, of politicians, and men of letters, who thronged St. James's Palace and peopled St. James's parish. Then came the Constantinople embassy. Lady Mary had always a longing for foreign travel, and now that her desires were gratified

Digitized by Google

she enjoyed herself with all the delight of a child and all the intelligence of a gifted woman. Travel was a rare pleasure for women then. A young English gentleman made the grand tour, and brought back, if he were foolish, nothing better than a few receipts for strange dishes, and some newer notions of vice than he had set out with; if he were wise he became 'possessed of the tongues,' and bore home spoils of voyage in the shape of Titians, and Correggios, and Raphaels—genuine or the reverse—to stock a picture gallery in the family mansion. But women very seldom travelled much in those days. Certainly no man or woman could then write of travels as Mary Wortley Montagu could, and did. We may well imagine the delight with which Mistress Skerret, and Lady Rich, and the Countess of Bristol, languid Lord Hervey's mother, and adoring Mr. Pope received these marvellous letters, which were destined to rank with the epistles of the younger Pliny and of Madame de Sévigné. Mr. Pope—whose translation of the 'Odyssey' had not yet made its appearance—may well have thought that Ulysses himself had not seen men and cities to greater advantage than the beautiful wanderer whom he was destined first to love and then to hate. As we read her letters we seem to live with her in the great gay gloomy life of Vienna, to hear once more the foolish squabbles of Ratisbon society as to who should and should not be styled Excellency, and to smile at the loyal crowds of English thronging the wretched inns of Hanover. But the fidelity of her descriptions may best be judged from her accounts

Digitized by Google

of life in Constantinople. The Vienna of to-day is very different from the ill-built, high-storied city of Maria Theresa; but the condition of Constantinople has scarcely changed with the century and a half that has gone by since Lady Mary was English Ambassadress there. She seems, indeed, to have seen the heads upon the famous monument of bronze twisted serpents in the Hippodrome; and perhaps she did, for Spon and Wheler's sketch of it in 1675 gives it with the triple heads still perfect, though these serpent heads, and all traces of them, have long since disappeared. In Constantinople Lady Mary first became acquainted with that principle of inoculation for the small-pox which she so enthusiastically advocated, which she introduced into England in spite of so much hostility and disfavour, and which, now accepted by almost all the civilised world, is still wrangled fiercely over in England.

Perhaps we may anticipate by some half-century to tell of Lady Mary's further career. She came back to London again, and shone as brilliantly as before, and was made love to by Pope, and laughed at her lover, and was savagely scourged by him in return with whips of stinging and shameful satire. One can understand better the story of the daughters of Lycambes hanging themselves under the pain of the iambics of Archilochus when one reads the merciless cruelty with which the great English satirist treated the woman he had loved. When Lady Mary grew old she went away abroad to live, without any opposition on her husband's part. They parted with

Digitized by Google

mutual indifference and mutual esteem. She lived for many years in Italy, chiefly in Venice. Then she came back to London for a short time to live in lodgings off Hanover Square, and be the curiosity of the town; and then she died. Lady Mary always had a dread of growing old; and she grew old and ill-favoured, as Horace Walpole was spiteful enough to put on record. When Pope was laughed at by the beauty, he might have said to her in the words that Clarendon used to the fair Castlemaine, 'Woman, you will grow old,' and have felt that in those words he had almost repaid the bitterness of her scorn. Horace Walpole indeed avenged the offended poet, long dead and famous, when he wrote thus of Lady Mary:—'Her dress, her avarice, and her impudence must amaze any one that never heard her name. She wears a foul mob that does not cover her greasy black locks, that hang loose, never combed or curled; an old magazine blue wrapper, that gapes open and discovers a canvas petticoat. Her face . . . partly covered . . . with white paint, which for cheapness she has bought so coarse that you would not use it to wash a chimney.' Such is one of the latest portraits of the woman who had been a poet's idol and the cherished beauty of a Court. Lady Mary, who had outlived her husband, left an exemplary daughter, who married Lord Bute, and a most unexemplary son, to whom she bequeathed one guinea, and who spent the greater part of his life drifting about the East, and acquiring all kinds of strange and useless knowledge.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IX.

'MALICE DOMESTIC—FOREIGN LEVY.'

SOME of the earlier letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu are written from Hanover, and give a lively description of the crowded state of that capital in the autumn of 1716. Hanover was crowded in this unusual way because King George was there at the time, and his presence was the occasion for a great gathering of diplomatic functionaries and statesmen and politicians of all orders. Some had political missions, open and avowed; some had missions of still greater political importance, which, however, were not formally avowed, and were for the most part conducted in secret. A turning-point had been reached in the affairs of Europe, and the King's visit to Hanover was an appropriate occasion for the preliminary steps to certain new arrangements that had become inevitable. Even before the King's visit to his dear Hanover the English Government had been paving the way for some of these new combinations and alliances. The very day after the royal coronation Stanhope had gone on a mission to Vienna which had something to do with the arrangements subsequently made.

It would, however, be paying too high a compli-

Digitized by Google

ment to the patriotic energy of the King to suppose that he had gone to Hanover for the sake of promoting arrangements calculated to be of advantage to England. Let us do justice to George's sincerity: he never pretended to any particular concern for English interests when they were not bound up with the interests of Hanover. But he had long been pining for a sight of Hanover. He had now been away from his beloved Herrenhausen for nearly two years, and he was consumed by an unconquerable home-sickness. That his absence might be inconvenient to his newly acquired country or to his ministers had no weight in his mind to counterbalance the desire of walking once more in the prim Herrenhausen avenues and looking over the level Hanoverian fields, or treading the corridors of the old Schloss, where the ancestral Guelphs had revelled, and where the ghost of Königsmark might well be supposed to wander. The Act for restraining the King from going out of the kingdom was repealed in May 1716. The Prince of Wales was to be appointed temporary ruler in the King's absence. This appointment was the only obstacle that George admitted to his journey. In the Hanover family, father had hated son, and son father, with traditional persistence. George was animated by the sourest jealousy of his son. One reason, if there had been no other, for this animosity was that the young man was well known to have some sympathy for the sufferings of his mother, the unhappy Sophia Dorothea, imprisoned in Ahlden, and he had at least once made an unsuccessful effort to see her. Since George came to

Digitized by Google

England he persisted in regarding his eldest son as a rival for popular favour, and this feeling was naturally kept alive by the enemies of the House of Hanover. To this detested son George had now to entrust the care of his kingdom, or else abandon his visit to dear Herrenhausen. The struggle was severe, but patriotic affection triumphed over paternal hatred. The Prince was named not indeed Regent, but Guardian of the Realm and Lieutenant, with as many restrictions upon his authority as the King was able or was allowed to impose, and on July 9 George set out for Hanover, accompanied by Secretary Stanhope. He was not long absent from England, however. On November 14 he came back again. Loyalists issued prints of the monarch waited upon by angels, and accompanied by flattering verses addressed to the 'Presedent of y^e^ Loyall Mug Houses.' But the devotion of the mug-houses could not make George personally popular, or diminish the general dislike to his German ministers, his German mistresses, and the horde of hungry foreigners—the Hanoverian rats, as Squire Western would have called them—who came over with him to England, seeking for place and pension, or pension without place.

The Thames was frozen over in the winter of this year, 1716, and London made very merry over the event. The ice was covered with booths for the sale of all sorts of wares, and with small coffee-houses and chop-houses. Wrestling rings were formed in one part; in another an ox was roasted whole. People played at push-pin, skated, or drove about on ice

Digitized by Google

boats brave with flags. Coaches moved slowly up and down the highway of barges and wherries, and hawkers cried their wares lustily in the new field that winter had offered them. All the banks of the river —and especially such places as the Temple Gardens —were crowded with curious throngs surveying the animated and unusual scene.

During George's absence from England he and his ministers had made some new and important arrangements in the policy of Europe. From this time forth —indeed, from the reign of Queen Anne—England was destined—doomed, perhaps—to have a regular part in the politics of the Continent. Before that time she had often been drawn into them, or had plunged enterprisingly or recklessly into them, but from the date of the accession of the House of Hanover England was as closely and constantly mixed up in the political affairs of the Continent as Austria or France. In the opening years of George's reign France, the Empire—Austria, that is to say, for the Holy Roman Empire had come to be merely Austria—and Spain were the important Continental Powers. Russia was only coming up; the genius of Peter the Great was beginning to make her way for her. Italy was as yet only a geographical expression—a place divided among minor kings and princes, who in politics sometimes bowed to the Pope's authority, and sometimes evaded or disregarded it. The power of Turkey was broken, never to be made strong again; the republic of Venice was already beginning to 'sink like a seaweed into whence she rose.' The position of

Digitized by Google

Spain was peculiar. Spain had for a long time been depressed, and weak, and disregarded. For many years it was thought that she was going down with Turkey and Venice—that the star of her fate had declined for ever. Suddenly, however, she began to raise her head above the horizon again, and to threaten the peace of the Continent. The peace of the Continent could not now be threatened without menace to the peace of England, for George's Hanoverian dominions were sure to be imperilled by European disturbance, and George would take good care that Hanover did not suffer while England had armies to move and money to spend. The English Government found it necessary to look out for allies.

France was under the rule of a remarkable man. Philip, Duke of Orleans and Regent of the kingdom, ought to have been a statesman of the Byzantine Empire. He was steeped to the lips in profligacy; he had no moral sense whatever, unless that which was supplied by the so-called code of honour. His intrigues, his carouses, his debaucheries, his hordes of mistresses, gave scandal even in that time of prodigal licence. But he had a cool head, a daring spirit, and an intellect capable of accepting new and original ideas. He must be called a statesman; and, despite the vulgarity of some of his vices, he has to be called a gentleman as well. He could be trusted; he would keep his word, once given. Other statesmen could treat with him, and not fear that he would break a promise or betray a confidence. How rare such qualities were at that day among the politicians of

Digitized by Google

any country the readers of the annals of Queen Anne do not need to be told. The Regent's principal adviser at this time was a man quite as immoral, and also quite as able, as himself—the Abbé Dubois, afterwards Cardinal and Prime Minister. Dubois had a profound knowledge of foreign affairs, and he thoroughly understood the ways of men. He had fought his way from humble rank to a great position in Church and State. He had trained his every faculty—and all his faculties were well worth the training—to the business of statecraft and of diplomatic intrigue. It is somewhat curious to note that the three ablest politicians in Europe at that day were churchmen: Swift in England, Dubois in France, and Alberoni—of whom we shall presently have to speak—in Spain. The quick and unclouded intelligence of the Regent—unclouded despite his days and nights of debauchery—saw that the cause of the Stuarts was gone. While that cause had hope he was willing to give it a chance, and he would naturally have welcomed its success; but he had taken good care during its late and vain effort not to embroil himself in any quarrel, or even any misunderstanding, with England on its account; and now that that poor struggle was over for the time, he believed that it would be for his interest to come to an understanding with King George.

The idea of such an understanding originated with the Regent himself. There has been some discussion among English historians as to the title of Townshend or of Stanhope to be considered its author. Whether

Digitized by Google

Townshend or Stanhope first accepted the suggestion does not seem a matter of much consequence. It is clear that the overture was made by the Regent. While King George and his minister Stanhope were in Hanover, the Regent sent Dubois, on various pretexts, to places where he might have an opportunity of coming to an understanding with both. Dubois had lived in England, and had made the personal acquaintance of Stanhope there. What could be more natural than that the Regent, who was a lover of art, should ask Dubois to visit the Hague, for the purpose of buying some books and pictures, about the time that the English minister was known to be in the neighbourhood? And how could old acquaintances like Stanhope and Dubois, thus brought into close proximity, fail to take advantage of the opportunity, and to have many a quiet, informal meeting? What more natural than that Dubois should afterwards go to Hanover to visit his friend Stanhope there, and that he should live in Stanhope's house? The account which the lively Lady Mary Wortley Montagu gives of the manner in which Hanover was then crowded would of itself explain the necessity for Dubois availing himself of Stanhope's hospitality, and for Stanhope's offer of it. The Portuguese Ambassador, Lady Mary says, thought himself very happy to be the temporary possessor of 'two wretched parlours in an inn.' Dubois and Stanhope had many talks, and the result was an arrangement which could be accepted by the King and the Regent.

The foreign policy of the Whigs had for its

Digitized by Google

object the maintenance of peace on the European continent by a close observance of the conditions laid down in the Treaty of Utrecht. The settlement made under that treaty was, however, very unsatisfactory to Spain. The new Spanish king, Philip of Anjou, had formally renounced his own rights of succession to the throne of France, and had given up the Italian provinces which formerly belonged to the Spanish Crown. But, as in most such instances at that time, an ambitious European sovereign had no sooner accepted conditions which appeared to him in any wise unsatisfactory, than he went to work to endeavour to set them aside, or get out of them somehow. Philip's whole mind was turned to the object of getting back again all that he had given up. This would not have seemed an easy task, even to a man of the stamp of Charles the Fifth. It would almost appear that any attempt in such a direction must bring Europe in arms against Spain. The Regent Duke of Orleans stood next in succession to the French throne, in consequence of Philip's renunciation of his rights by virtue of the Treaty of Utrecht. The Italian provinces which had once been Spain's were now handed over to Austria, and Austria would of course be resolute in their defence. King Philip was not the man to confront the difficulties of a situation of this kind by his own unaided powers of mind. He was very far indeed from being a Charles the Fifth. He was not even a Philip the Second. But he had for his minister a man as richly endowed with statesmanship and courage as he him-

Digitized by Google

self was wanting in those qualities. Giulio Alberoni, an Italian born at Piacenza in 1664, was at one time appointed agent of the Duke of Parma at the Court of Spain, and in this position acquired very soon the favour of Philip. Alberoni was of the most humble origin. His father was a gardener, and he himself a poor village priest. He rose, however, both in diplomacy and in the Church, having worked his way up to the favour of the Duke of Parma, to work still further on to the complete favour of Philip the Fifth. The first marked success in his upward career was made when he contrived to commend himself to the Duc de Vendôme, the greatest French commander of his day. The Duke of Parma had occasion to deal with Vendôme, and sent the Bishop of Parma to confer with him. The Duc de Vendôme was a man who affected roughness and brutality of manners, and made it his pride to set all rules of decency at defiance. Peter the Great, Potemkin, Suwarrow, would have seemed men of ultra-refinement when compared with him. His manner of receiving the bishop was such that the bishop quitted his presence abruptly and without saying a word, and returning to Parma, told his master that no consideration on earth should induce him ever to approach the brutal French soldier again. Alberoni was beginning to rise at this time. He offered to undertake the mission, feeling sure that not even Vendôme could disconcert him. He was entrusted with the task of renewing the negotiations, and he obtained admission to the presence of Vendôme. Every reader

Digitized by Google

remembers the story in the 'Arabian Nights' of that brother of the talkative barber who threw himself into the spirit of the rich Barmecide's humour, and by outdoing him in the practical joke secured for ever his favour and his friendship. Alberoni acted on this principle at his first meeting with Vendôme. He outbuffooned even Vendôme's buffoonery. The story will not bear minute explanation, but Alberoni soon satisfied Vendôme that he had to do with a man after his own heart, what Elizabethan writers would have called a 'mad wag' indeed, and Vendôme gave him his confidence.

Alberoni was made prime minister by Philip in 1715, and cardinal by the Court of Rome shortly after. The ambition of Alberoni was in the first instance to recover to Spain her lost Italian provinces, and to raise Spain once more to the commanding position she had held when Charles the Fifth abdicated the crown. Alberoni's policy, indeed, was a mistake as regarded the strength and the prosperity of Spain. Spain's Italian and Flemish provinces were of no manner of advantage to her. They were sources of weakness, because they constantly laid Spain open to an attack from any enemy, who had the advantage of being able to choose his battle-ground for himself so long as Spain had outlying provinces scattered over the Continent. Indeed, it is made clear, from the testimony of many observers, that Spain was rapidly recovering her domestic prosperity from the moment when she lost those provinces, and when the continual strain to which they

Digitized by Google

exposed her finances was stopped. At that epoch of Europe's political development, however, the idea had hardly occurred to any statesman that national greatness could come about in any other way than by the annexing or the recovery of territory. Alberoni intrigued against the Regent, and was particularly anxious to injure the Emperor. He was well inclined to enter into negotiations, and even into an alliance, with England. He lent his help when first he took office to bring to a satisfactory conclusion some arrangements for a commercial treaty between England and Spain. This treaty gave back to British subjects whatever advantages in trade they had enjoyed under the Austrian kings of Spain, and contained what we should now call a most favoured nation clause, providing that no British subjects should be exposed to higher duties than were paid by Spaniards. Alberoni cautiously refrained from giving any encouragement to the Stuarts, and always professed to the British minister the strongest esteem and friendship for King George. Stanhope himself had known Alberoni formerly in Spain, and had from the first formed a very high opinion of his abilities. He now opened a correspondence with the cardinal, expressing a strong wish for a sincere and lasting friendship between England and Spain; and this correspondence was kept up for some time in so friendly and confidential a manner, that very little was left for the regular accredited minister from Spain at the Court of King George to do.

Alberoni, however, was somewhat too vain and

Digitized by Google

impatient. He had brought over Sweden to his side, partly because he found Charles the Twelfth in a bad humour on account of the cession to Hanover of certain Swedish territories by the King of Denmark, who had clutched them while the warlike Charles was away in Turkey. The cession of these places brought Hanover to the sea, and were of importance thus to Hanover and to England alike. George the Elector was in his petty way an ambitious Hanoverian prince, however little interest he had in English affairs. He had always been anxious to get possession of the districts of Bremen and Verden, which had been handed over to Sweden at the Peace of Westphalia. Reckless enterprise had carried Charles the Twelfth—'Swedish Charles,' with 'a frame of adamant, a soul of fire,' whom no dangers frighted, and no labours tired, the 'unconquered lord of pleasure and of pain'—too far in the rush of his chivalrous madness. His vaulting ambition had overleaped itself, and fallen on the other side; and after his defeat at Pultowa, all his enemies, some of whom he had scared into inaction before, turned upon him as the nations of Europe turned upon Napoleon the First after Moscow. Charles had gone into Turkey and taken refuge there, and it seemed as if he had fallen never to rise again. In his absence the King of Denmark seized Schleswig-Holstein, Bremen, and Verden. At the close of 1714 Charles suddenly roused himself from depression, and appeared at the town of Stralsund, almost as much to the alarm of Europe as Napoleon had caused when

Digitized by Google

he left Elba and landed on the southern shore of France. The King of Denmark shuddered at the prospect of a struggle with Charles, and in order to secure some part of his spoils he entered into a treaty with the Elector of Hanover, by virtue of which he handed over Bremen and Verden to George, on condition that George should pay him a handsome sum of money, and join him in resisting Sweden.

Nothing could be less justifiable, or indeed more nefarious, than these arrangements. They were discreditable to George the First, and they were disgraceful to the King of Denmark. Yet the general policy of that time seems to have approved of the whole transaction, and regarded it merely as a good stroke of business for Hanover and for England. Alberoni, having secured the help of Sweden, got together great forces both by sea and by land, and prepared for a reconquest of the lost Italian provinces. He occupied Sardinia, and made an attempt on Sicily. But this was going a little too far and too fast. Alberoni frightened the great States of Europe into activity against him. England, France, and Holland formed a triple alliance, the basis of which was that the House of Hanover should be guaranteed in England, and the House of Orleans in France, should the young King, Louis the Fifteenth, die without issue. Not long after, the triple alliance was expanded into a quadruple alliance, the Emperor of Germany becoming one of its members. An English fleet appeared in the Straits of Messina, and a sea fight took place in

Digitized by Google

which the Spaniards lost almost all their vessels. Alberoni tried to get up another fleet for the purpose of making a landing in Scotland under the Duke of Ormond, with a view to a great Jacobite rising. But the seas and skies seem always to have been fatal to Spanish projects against England, and the expedition under Ormond was as much of a failure as the far greater expedition under Alexander of Parma. The fleet was wrecked in the Bay of Biscay. The French were invading the northern provinces of Spain, and the King of Spain was compelled not only to get rid of Alberoni, but to renounce once more any claim to the French throne, and to abandon his attempts on Sardinia and Sicily. Another danger was removed from England by the death of Charles the Twelfth. 'A petty fortress and a dubious hand' brought about the end of him who had, 'like the wind's blast, never-resting, homeless,' stormed so long across war-convulsed Europe, and 'left that name at which the world grew pale to point a moral or adorn a tale.' Charles the Twelfth had just entered into an alliance with Peter the Great for an enterprise to destroy the House of Hanover and restore the Stuarts, when the memorable bullet at the siege of Frederikshall in Norway brought his strange career to a close in December 1718. A junction between such men as Charles the Twelfth and Peter the Great might indeed have had matter in it. Peter was probably the greatest sovereign born to a throne in modern Europe. An alliance between Peter's profound sagacity and indomitable perseverance, and

Digitized by Google

Charles's unbounded courage and military skill, might have been ominous for any cause against which it was aimed. The good fortune which from first to last seems on the whole to have attended the House of Hanover, and followed it even in spite of itself, was with it when the bullet from an unknown hand struck down Charles the Twelfth.

These international arrangements have for us now very little real interest. They were entirely artificial and temporary. Nothing came of them that could long endure, or make any real change in the relations of the European States. They had hardly anything to do with the interests of the various peoples over whose heads and without whose knowledge or concern they were made. It was still firmly believed that two or three diplomatists, meeting in a half-clandestine way in a minister's closet or a lady's drawing-room, could come to agreements which would bind down nations and rule political movements. The first real upheaving of any genuine force, national or personal, in European life tore through all their meshes in a moment. Frederick the Great, soon after, is to compel Europe to reconstruct her scheme of political arrangements; later yet, the French Revolution is to clear the ground more thoroughly and violently still. The triple alliance, concocted by the Regent and Stanhope and Dubois, had not the slightest permanent effect on the general condition of Europe. It was a clever and an original idea of the Regent to think of bringing England and France, these old hereditary enemies,

Digitized by Google

into a permanent alliance, and it was right of Stanhope to enter into the spirit of the enterprise; but the actual conditions of England and France did not allow of an abiding friendship. The national interest, as it was then understood, of the one State was in antagonism to the national interest of the other. Nor could France and England combined have kept down the growth of other European States then rising into importance and beginning to cast their shadows far in front of them. It seems only amusing to us now to read of King George's directions to his minister—'To crush the Czar immediately, to secure his ships, and even to seize his person.' The courageous and dull old King had not the faintest perception of the part which either the Czar or the Czar's country was destined to play in the history of Europe. At present we are all inclined, and with some reason, to think that French statesmen, as a rule, are wanting in a knowledge of foreign politics—in an appreciation of the relative proportions of one force and another in the affairs of Europe outside France. But in the days of George the First, French statesmen were much more accomplished in the knowledge of foreign politics than the statesmen of England. There was not, probably, in George's administration any man who had anything like the knowledge of the affairs of foreign countries which was possessed by Dubois. But it had not yet occurred to the mind of Dubois, or the Regent, or anybody else, that the relations of one State to another, or one people to another, are anything more than the arrangements

Digitized by Google

which various sets of diplomatic agents think fit to make among themselves and to consign to the formality of a treaty.

The interest we have now in all these 'understandings,' engagements, and so-called alliances, is personal rather than national. So far as England is concerned, they led to a squabble and a split in George's administration. It would hardly be worth while to go into a minute history of the quarrel between Townshend and Stanhope, Sunderland and Walpole. Sunderland, a man of great ability and ambition, had never been satisfied with the place he held in the King's administration, and the disputes which sprang up out of the negotiations for the triple alliance gave him an opportunity of exerting his influence against some of his colleagues. Fresh occasion for intrigue, jealousy, and anger was given by the desire of the King to remain during the winter in Hanover, and his fear, on the other hand, that his son—the Prince who was at the head of affairs in his absence—was forming a party against him, and was caballing with some of the members of the Government. Sunderland acted on the King's narrow and petty fears. He distinctly accused Townshend and Walpole of a secret understanding with the Prince and the Duke of Argyll against the Sovereign's interests. The result of all this was that the King dismissed Lord Townshend, and that Walpole insisted on resigning office. The King, to do him justice, would gladly have kept Walpole in his service, but Walpole would not stay. It is clear

Digitized by Google

that Walpole was glad of the opportunity of getting out of the ministry. He professed to be deeply touched by the earnestness of the King's remonstrances. He was moved, it is stated, to tears. At all events, he got very successfully through the ceremony of tear-shedding. But, although he wept, he did not soften. His purpose remained fixed. He went out of office, and, to all intents and purposes, passed straightway into opposition. Stanhope became First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer.

For a long time it must have been apparent to every one that Walpole was the coming minister. Walpole himself must have felt satisfied on the point; but he was probably well content to admit to himself that his time had not yet come. Walpole was not a great man. He wanted the moral qualities which are indispensable to greatness. He was almost as much wanting in them as Bolingbroke himself. But, if his genius was far less brilliant than that of Bolingbroke, he was amply furnished with patience and steadiness. He could wait. He did not devise half a dozen plans for one particular object, and fly from one to the other when the moment for action was approaching, and end by rejecting them all when the moment for action had arrived. He made up his mind to a certain course, and he held to it; if its chance did not come to-day, it might come to-morrow. He had no belief in men's sincerity—or women's either. There seems reason to believe that the famous saying ascribed to him, about every man

Digitized by Google

having his price, was not used by him in that unlimited sense; that he only spoke of 'these men'—of certain men—and said that every one of them had his price. But he always acted as if the description he gave of 'these men' might safely be extended to all men. He had a coarse, licentious nature. He enjoyed the company of loose women. He loved obscene talk; not merely did he love it, but he indulged in and encouraged it for practical purposes of his own; he thought it useful at men's dinner parties, because it gave even the dullest man a subject on which he could find something to say. One could not call Walpole a patriot in the higher sense; he wanted altogether that fine fibre in his nature, that exalted, half-poetic feeling, that faculty of imagination which quickens practical and prosaic objects with the spirit of the ideal, and which are needed to make a man a patriot in the noblest meaning of the word. But he loved his country in his own heavy, practical, matter-of-fact sort of way, and that was just the sort of way which, at the time, happened to be most useful to England. Let it be said, too, in justice to Walpole, that the most poetic and lyrical nature would have found little subject for enthusiasm in the England of Walpole's earlier political career. It was not exactly the age for a Philip Sidney, or for a Milton. England's home and foreign policy had for years been singularly ignoble. At home it had been a conflict of mean intrigues; abroad, a policy of selfish alliances and base compromises and surrenders. The splendid military genius of Marlborough only

Digitized by Google

shone as it did as if to throw into more cruel light the infamy of the intrigues and plots to which it was often sacrificed. No man could be enthusiastic about Queen Anne or George the First. The statesmen who professed the utmost ardour for the Stuart cause were ready to sell it at a moment's notice, to secure their own personal position; most of those who grovelled before King George were known to have been in treaty, up to the last, with his rival. We may excuse Walpole if, under such conditions, he took a prosaic view of the state of things, and made his patriotism a very practical sort of service to his country. It was, as we have said, precisely the sort of service England just then stood most in need of. Walpole applied himself to secure for his country peace and retrenchment. He did not, indeed, maintain a sacred principle of peace: he had no sacred principle about anything. We shall see more lately that he did not scruple, for party reasons, to lend himself to a wanton and useless war, well knowing it was wanton and useless; but his general policy was one of peace, and so long as he had his own way there would have been no waste of England's resources on foreign battle-fields. He despised war and the trade of war in his heart. To him war showed only in its vulgar, practical, and repulsive features; the soldier was a man who got paid for the trade of killing. Walpole might be likened to a shrewd and sensible steward who is sincerely anxious to manage his master's estate with order and economy, and who, for that very reason, is willing to indulge

Digitized by Google

his master's vices and to sanction his prodigalities to a certain extent, knowing that if he attempts to draw the purse-strings too closely an open rupture will be the result, and then some steward will come in who has no taste for saving, and who will let everything go to rack and ruin. He was the first of the long line of English ministers who professed to regard economy as one of the great objects of statesmanship. He established securely the principle that to make the two ends meet was one of the first duties of patriotism. He founded, if we may use such an expression, the dynasty of statesmen to which Pitt, and Peel, and Gladstone belong. The change in our constitutional ways which set up that new dynasty was of infinitely greater importance to England than the change which settled the Brunswicks in the place of the Stuarts.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER X.

HOME AFFAIRS.

MEANWHILE the public seemed to have forgotten all about Lord Oxford. 'Harley, the nation's great support,' as Swift had called him, had been nearly two years in the Tower, and the nation did not seem to miss its great support, or to care anything about him. In May 1717, Lord Oxford sent a petition to the House of Lords, complaining of the hardship and injustice of this unaccountable delay in his impeachment, and the House of Lords began at last to put on an appearance of activity. The Commons, too, revived and enlarged their secret committee, of which it will be remembered that Walpole was the chairman. Times, however, had changed. Walpole was not in the administration, and felt no anxiety to assist the ministry in any way. He purposely absented himself from the sittings, and a new chairman had to be chosen. Probably Walpole had always known well enough that there was not evidence to sustain a charge of high treason against his former rival; perhaps now that the rival was down in the dust, never to rise again, he did not care to press for his punishment. At all events, he made it clear that he felt no interest in the impeachment of Lord Oxford.

Digitized by Google

The friends of the ruined minister had recourse to an ingenious artifice. June 24, 1717, had been appointed for the opening of the proceedings. Westminster Hall, lately the scene of the impeachment of Somers, and soon to be the scene of the impeachment of Warren Hastings, was of course the place where Oxford had to come forward and meet his accusers. The King, the Prince and the Princess of Wales were seated in the Hall; most of the foreign ambassadors and ministers were spectators. The imposing formalities and artificial terrors of such a ceremonial were kept up. Lord Oxford had been brought from the Tower to Westminster by water. He was now led bareheaded up to the bar by the Deputy Lieutenant of the Tower, having the axe borne before him, its edge turned away from him as yet, symbolic of the doom that might await the prisoner, but to which he had not yet been declared responsible. When the reading of the articles of impeachment and other opening passages of the trial had been gone through, Lord Harcourt, Oxford's friend, interposed, and announced that he had a motion to make. In order to hear his motion, the Peers had to withdraw to their own house. There Lord Harcourt moved that the House should dispose of the two articles of impeachment for high treason, before going into any of the evidence to support the charges for high crimes and misdemeanours. The argument for this course of proceeding was plausible. If Oxford were convicted of high treason he would have to forfeit his life; and in such case, where would

Digitized by Google

be the use of convicting him of a minor offence? The plan on which the Commons proposed to act, that of taking all the evidence in order of time, no matter to which charge it had reference, before coming to any conclusion, might, as Lord Harcourt put it, 'draw the trial into prodigious length,' and absolutely to no purpose. Should the accused be found guilty of high treason he must suffer death, and there would be an end of the whole business. Should he be acquitted of the graver charge, he might then be impeached on the lighter accusation; and what harm would have been done or time lost? The motion was carried by a majority of eighty-eight to fifty-six.

Now it is hardly possible to suppose that the Peers who voted in the majority did not know very well that the Commons would not, and could not, submit to have their mode of conducting an impeachment which it was their business to manage, thus altered at the sudden dictation of the other chamber. The House of Commons was growing in importance every day; the House of Lords was proportionately losing its influence. The Commons determined that they would conduct the impeachment in their own way or not at all. Doubtless some of them, most of them, were glad to be well out of the whole affair. July 1 was fixed for the renewal of the proceedings. Some fruitless conferences between Lords and Commons wasted two days, and on the evening of July 3 the Lords sat in Westminster Hall, and invited by proclamation the accusers of Oxford to appear. No manager came forward to conduct the impeachment on the

Digitized by Google

part of the Commons. The Peers sat for a quarter of an hour as if waiting for a prosecutor, well knowing that none was coming. A solemn farce was played. The Peers went back to their chamber, and there a motion was made acquitting 'Robert, Earl of Oxford and Earl Mortimer,' on the ground that no charge had been maintained against him. A crowd without hailed the adoption of the motion with cheers. Oxford was released from the Tower, and nothing more was ever heard of his impeachment. The Duke of Marlborough was furious with rage at Oxford's escape, and the Duchess is described as 'almost distracted that she could not obtain her revenge.' Magnanimity was not a characteristic virtue of the early days of the Georges.

This was what has sometimes been called the honourable acquittal of Oxford. An English judge once spoke humorously of a prisoner having been 'honourably acquitted on a flaw in the indictment.' Harley's was like this: it was not an acquittal; and it was not honourable to the man impeached, the House that forbore to press the impeachment, or the House that contrived his escape from trial. Oxford had been committed to the Tower and impeached for reasons that had little to do with his guilt or innocence, or with true public policy; he was released from prison and relieved from further proceedings in just the same way. There was not evidence against him on which he could be convicted of high treason; and this was well known to his enemies when they first consigned him to the Tower. But there could

Digitized by Google

not be the slightest moral doubt on the mind of any man that Oxford had intrigued with the Stuarts, and had endeavoured to procure their restoration, and that he had done this even since his committal to the Tower. His guilt, whatever it was, had been increased by him, and not diminished, since the beginning of the proceedings taken against him. But he had only done what most other statesmen of that day had been doing, or would have done if they had seen advantage in it. He was not more guilty than some of his bitterest opponents, the Duke of Marlborough among others. All but the very bitterest opponents were glad to be done with the whole business. It must have come to a more or less farcical end sooner or later, and sensible men were of opinion that the sooner the better. Of Harley, 'Earl of Oxford and Earl Mortimer,' as his titles ran, we shall not hear any more; we have already foreshadowed the remainder of his life and his death. This short account of his sham impeachment is introduced here merely as a part of the historic continuity of the narrative. History has few characters less interesting than that of Oxford. He held a position of greatness without being great; he fell, and even his fall could not invest him with tragic dignity.

On December 13, 1718, Lord Stanhope, who had been raised to the peerage, first as Viscount and then as Earl Stanhope, introduced into the House of Lords a measure ingeniously entitled 'A Bill for strengthening the Protestant Interest in these King-

Digitized by Google

doms.' The title of the Bill was strictly appropriate according to our present ideas, and according to the ideas of enlightened men in Stanhope's days also; but it must at first have misled some of Stanhope's audience. Most Churchmen are now ready to admit that the interests of the Church of England are strengthened by every measure which tends to secure religious equality; but most Churchmen were not quite so sure of this in the reign of George the First. The Bill brought in by Stanhope was really a measure intended to relieve Dissenters from some of the penalties and disabilities imposed on them in the reign of Queen Anne.

The second reading of the Bill was the occasion of a long and animated debate. Several noble lords appealed to the opinion of the bishops, and the bishops spoke in answer to the appeal. The Archbishop of Canterbury, the Archbishop of York, the Bishop of London, the Bishop of Bristol, the Bishop of Rochester (Atterbury), the Bishop of Chester, and other prelates, spoke against the Bill. The Bishop of Bangor, the Bishop of Gloucester, the Bishop of Lincoln, the Bishop of Norwich, and the Bishop of Peterborough spoke in its favour. The Bishop of Peterborough's was a strenuous and an eloquent argument in favour of the principle of the Bill. 'The words "Church," and "Church's danger,"' said the Bishop of Peterborough, 'had often been made use of to carry on sinister designs; and then these words made a mighty noise in the mouth of silly women and children;' but in his opinion the

Digitized by Google

Church, which he defined to be a scriptural institution upon a legal establishment, was founded upon a rock, and 'could not be in danger as long as we enjoyed the light of the Gospel and our excellent constitution.' The argument would have been perfect if the eloquent bishop had only left out the proviso about 'our excellent constitution.' For the opponents of the measure were contending, as was but natural, that the Bill, if passed into law, would not leave to the Church the constitutional protection which it had previously enjoyed.

The Bill passed the House of Lords on December 23, and was sent down to the Commons next day. It was read there a first time at once, was read a second time after a debate of some nine hours, and was passed without amendment by a majority of 221 against 170 on January 10, 1719. The test majority, however, by which the Bill had been decisively carried, on the motion to go into committee, was but small—243 against 202—and this majority was mainly due to the vote of the Scottish members. Stanhope, it is well known, would have made the measure more liberal than it was, and was dissuaded from this intention by Sunderland, who insisted that if it were too liberal it would not pass the House of Commons. The result seems to prove that Sunderland was right. Walpole spoke against the Bill, limited as its concessions were. It would be interesting to know what sort of argument a man of Walpole's principles could have offered against a measure embodying the very spirit and sense of Whig policy. Unfortunately

Digitized by Google

we have no means of knowing. The galleries of the House of Commons were rigidly closed against strangers on the day of the debate, and all we are allowed to hear concerning Walpole's part in the discussion is that 'Mr. Robert Walpole made a warm speech, chiefly levelled against a great man in the present administration.' There is something characteristic of Walpole in this. He was never very particular about principle, or even about seeming consistency; but still, when opposing a measure which he might have been expected to support, he would have probably found it more expedient as well as more agreeable to confine himself chiefly to the task of attacking some 'great man in the present administration.'

It ought to be said of Stanhope that he was distinctly in advance of his age as regarded the recognition of the principle of religious equality. He was not only anxious to put the Protestant Dissenters as much as possible on a level with Churchmen in all the privileges of citizenship, but he was even strongly in favour of mitigating the severity of the laws against the Roman Catholics. In his 'History of England from the Peace of Utrecht to the Peace of Versailles,' Lord Stanhope, the descendant of the minister whose career and character have done so much honour to a name and a family, claims for him the credit of having put on paper a scheme 'not undeserving of attention as the earliest germ of Roman Catholic emancipation.' Stanhope's life was too soon and too suddenly cut short to allow him to push forward his scheme to anything like a practical position, and it is not

Digitized by Google

probable that he could in any case have done much with it at such a time. Still, though fate cut short the life, it ought not to cut short the praise.

The Peerage Bill raised a question of some constitutional importance. The principal object of this measure, which was introduced on February 28th, 1719, in the House of Lords, by the Duke of Somerset, and was believed to have Lord Sunderland for its actual author, was to limit the prerogative of the Crown in the creation of English peerages to a number not exceeding six in addition to those already existing. According to the provisions of the Bill, the Crown might still create new Peers on the extinction of old titles for want of male heirs; but, with this exception, the power of adding new peerages would be limited to the number of six. It was also proposed that, instead of the sixteen elective Peers from Scotland, twenty-five hereditary Peers should be created. This part of the Bill was that which at the time gave rise to most of the debate, in the House of Lords at least; but the really important constitutional question was that which involved the limitation of the privilege of the Sovereign. The Sovereign himself sent a special message to the House of Lords, informing them that 'he has so much at heart the settling the Peerage of the whole kingdom upon such a foundation as may secure the freedom and constitution of Parliament in all future ages, that he is willing that his prerogative stand not in the way of so great and necessary a work.' The ostensible motive for the proposed legislation was to get rid of

Digitized by Google

difficulties caused by the over-increase of the numbers of the peerage since the union of England and Scotland; the real object was to guard against such a *coup d'état* as that accomplished in Anne's later days, by the creation of the twelve Peers, of whom Mrs. Masham's husband was one. Nothing could be more generous and liberal, it might have been thought, than the expressed willingness of the King to surrender a part of his prerogative. This very readiness, however, expressed as it was by anticipation, and before the measure had yet made any progress, set a great many persons in and out of Parliament thinking. A vehement dispute soon sprang up, in which the pamphleteer, as usual, bore an important part. Addison, in one of his latest political and literary efforts, defended the proposed change. He described his pamphlet as the work of an 'Old Whig.' It was written as a reply to a pamphlet by Steele condemning the Bill, and signed 'A Plebeian.' Reply, retort, and rejoinder followed in more and more heated and personal style. The excitement created caused the measure to be dropped for the session; but it was brought in again in the session following, and it passed through all its stages in the Lords without trouble and with much rapidity.

When it came down to the House of Commons, however, a very different fate awaited it. Walpole assailed it with powerful eloquence and with unanswerable argument. The true nature of the scheme now came out. It would have simply rendered the representative chamber powerless against a majority of the chamber which did not represent. This will

Digitized by Google

be readily apparent to any one who considers the subject for a moment by the light of our more modern experience. A majority of the House of Commons, representing, it may be, a vast majority of the people, agree to a certain measure. It goes up to the House of Lords, and is rejected there. What means in the end have the Commons, who represent the nation, of giving effect to the wishes of the nation? They have none but the privilege of the Crown to create, under the advice of ministers, a sufficient number of new Peers to outvote the opponents of the measure. No alternative but revolution and civil war would be left if this were taken away. It is true that the power might be again abused by the Sovereign, as it was abused in Anne's days on the advice of the Tories; but we know that, as a matter of fact, it is hardly ever abused—hardly ever even used. Why is it hardly ever used? For the good reason that all men know it is existing, and can be used should the need arise. Even were it to be misused, the misuse would happen under responsible ministers, who could be challenged to answer for it, and who would have to make good their defence. But if the House of Lords were made supreme over the House of Commons in every instance, by abolishing the unlimited prerogative which alone keeps it in check, who could then be held responsible for abuse—and before whom? Who could call the House of Lords to account? Before what tribunal could it be summoned to answer? The Peers are now independent of the people, and would then be also independent of the Crown. There is hardly a

Digitized by Google

great political reform known to modern England which, if the Peerage Bill had become law, would not have been absolutely rejected or else carried by a popular revolution.

Walpole attacked the Bill on every side. Such legislation, he insisted, 'would in time bring back the Commons into the state of servile dependency they were in when they wore the badges of the Lords.' It would, he contended, take away 'one of the most powerful incentives to virtue, . . . since there would be no coming to honour but through the winding-sheet of an old decrepit lord and the grave of an extinct noble family.' Walpole knew well his public and his time. He dwelt most strongly on this last consideration—that the Bill if passed into law would shut the gates of the Peerage against deserving Commoners. He asked indignantly how the House of Lords could expect the Commons to give their concurrence to a measure 'by which they and their posterities are to be excluded from the Peerage.' The commoner who, after this way of putting the matter, assented to the Bill, must either have been an unambitious bachelor, or have been blessed in a singularly unambitious wife. Steele, who, as we have seen, had fought gallantly against the Bill with his pen, now made a very effective speech against it. He showed that the measure would alter the whole constitutional position of the House of Lords, whether as a legislative chamber or a court of appeal. 'The restraint of the Peers to a certain number will make the most powerful of them have all the rest under

Digitized by Google

their direction, . . . and judges so made by the blind order of birth will be capable of no other way of decision.' The prerogative, as Steele put it very clearly, 'can do no hurt when ministers do their duty; but a settled number of Peers may abuse their power when no man is answerable for them, or can call them to account for their encroachments.' The Bill was rejected by a majority of 269 votes against 177.

In March 1720 was passed an Act with a pompous and even portentous title: it was called 'An Act for the better securing the Dependency of the Kingdom of Ireland upon the Crown of Great Britain.' The preamble recited that 'attempts have been lately made to shake off the subjection of Ireland unto and dependence upon the Imperial Crown of this realm, which will be of dangerous consequence to Great Britain and Ireland.' The reader would naturally assume that some fresh designs of the Stuarts had been discovered, having for their theatre the Catholic provinces of Ireland. Was James Stuart about to land at Kinsale? Had Alberoni got hold of the Irish Catholics? Was Atterbury plotting with Swift for an armed insurrection in Munster and Connaught? No; nothing of the kind was expected. The preamble of the alarming Act went on to set forth that the House of Lords in Ireland had lately, 'against law, assumed to themselves a power and jurisdiction to examine, correct, and amend the judgments and decrees of the courts of justice in the kingdom of Ireland;' and this alleged trespass of the Irish House

Digitized by Google

of Lords was the whole cause of the new measure. The Act declared that the Irish House of Lords had no jurisdiction 'to judge of, affirm, or reverse any judgment, sentence, or decree given or made in any court within the said kingdom.' This was an enactment of the most serious moment in a constitutional sense. It made the Parliament of Ireland subordinate to the Parliament of England; it reduced the Irish House of Lords from a position in Ireland equal to that of the House of Lords in England, down to the level of a mere provincial assembly. The occasion of the passing of this Act was the decision given by the Irish House of Lords in the celebrated cause of Sherlock against Annesley. It is not necessary for us to go into the story of the case at any length. It was a question of disputed property. The defendant had obtained a decree in the Irish Court of Exchequer, which decree was reversed on an appeal to the Irish House of Lords. The defendant appealed to the English House of Lords, who confirmed the judgment of the Irish Court of Exchequer, and ordered him to be put in possession of the disputed property. The Irish House of Lords stood by their authority, and actually ordered the Irish Barons of Exchequer to be taken into custody by Black Rod for having offended against the privileges of the Peers and the rights and liberties of Ireland. The Act was passed to settle the question, and reduce the Irish House of Lords to submission and subordinate rank. It was settled merely of course by the strength of a majority in the English Parliament. The Duke of Leeds recorded a sensible

Digitized by Google

and a manly protest against the vote of the majority of his brother Peers. One or two of the reasons he gives for his protest are worth reading even now. The eleventh reason is, 'Because it is the glory of the English laws and the blessing attending Englishmen, that they have justice administered at their doors, and not to be drawn as formerly to Rome by appeals;' 'and by this order the people of Ireland must be drawn from Ireland hither whensoever they receive any injustice from the Chancery there, by which means poor men must be trampled on, as not being able to come over to seek for justice.' The thirteenth reason is still more concise: 'Because this taking away the jurisdiction of the Lords' House in Ireland may be a means to disquiet the Lords there and disappoint the King's affairs.'

The protest, it need hardly be said, received little or no attention. More than sixty years after, when England was perplexed in foreign and colonial troubles, the spirit of the protest walked abroad and animated Grattan and the Irish Volunteers. But in 1720 the Parliament at Westminster was free to do as it pleased with the Parliament in Dublin. To the vast majority of the Irish people it might have been a matter of absolute indifference which Parliament reigned supreme. They had as little to expect from Dublin as from Westminster. The Irish Parliament was quite as ready to promote legislation for the further persecution of Catholics as any English Parliament could be. The Parliament in Dublin was merely an assembly of English and Protestant

Digitized by Google

colonists. Yet it is worthy of remark, that then and after, the sympathies of the people, when they had any means of showing them, went with the Irish Parliament simply because of the name it bore. It was, at all events, the so-called Parliament of Ireland; it represented, at least in name, the authority of the Irish people. So long as it existed there was some recognition of the fact that Ireland was something more than a merely conquered country held by the title of the sword, and governed by arbitrary proclamation, secret warrant, and drum-head court-martial.

Death had been busy among eminent men for some few years. The Duke of Shrewsbury, the 'king of hearts,' the statesman whose appointment as Lord Treasurer secured the throne of Great Britain for the Hanoverian family, died on February 18, 1717. William Penn, the founder of the great American State of Pennsylvania, closed his long active and fruitful life in 1718. We have here only to record his death; the history of his deeds belongs to an earlier time. Controversy has now quite ceased to busy itself about his noble character, and his life of splendid unostentatious beneficence. His name, which without his consent and against his wishes was made part f the name of the State which he founded, will be remembered in connection with its history while the Delaware and the Schuylkill flow. Of his famous treaty with the Indians nothing perhaps was ever better said than the comment of Voltaire, that it was the only league between savages

Digitized by Google

and white men which was never sworn to and never broken. Addison died, still comparatively young, on June 17, 1719. He had reached the highest point of his political career but a short time before, when, on one of the changes of office between Stanhope and Sunderland, he became one of the principal secretaries of state. His health, however, was breaking down, and he never had indeed the slightest gift or taste for political life. 'Pity,' said Mrs. Manley, the authoress of 'The New Atlantis,' speaking of Addison, 'that politics and sordid interest should have carried him out of the road of Helicon and snatched him from the embraces of the Muses.' But it seems quite unjust to ascribe Addison's divergence into political ways to any sordid interest. He had political friends who loved him, and he went with them into politics as he might have travelled in company with them, and for the sake of their company, although caring nothing for travel himself. No man was better aware of his incapacity for the real business of public life. Addison had himself pointed out all the objections to his political advancement before that advancement was pressed upon him. He was not a statesman; he was not an administrator; he could not do any genuine service as head of a department; he was not even a good clerk: he was a wretched speaker; he was consumed by a morbid shyness, almost as oppressive as that of the poet Cowper in a later day, or of Nathaniel Hawthorne, the American novelist, later still. His whole public career was at best but a harmless

Digitized by Google

mistake. It has done no harm to his literary fame. The world has almost forgotten it. Even lovers of Addison might have to be reminded now that the creator of Sir Roger de Coverley was once a diplomatic agent, and a secretary of state, and a member of the House of Commons. Some of the essays which Addison contributed to the 'Spectator' are like enough to outlive the system of government by party, and perhaps even the whole system of representative government. Sir Roger de Coverley will not be forgotten until men forget Parson Adams, and Robinson Crusoe, and Gil Blas, and for that matter Sir John Falstaff and Don Quixote.

For some time things were looking well at home and abroad. The policy of the Government appeared to have been completely successful on the Continent. The confederations that had been threatening England were dissolved or broken up; the Jacobite conspiracies seemed to have been made hopeless and powerless. The friendship established between England and the Regent of France had to all seeming robbed the Stuarts of their last chance. James the Chevalier had no longer a home on French soil. Paris could not any more be the head-quarters of his organisation and the scene of his mock Court. The Regent had kept his promises to the English Government. It was well known that, so far from encouraging or permitting the designs of the exiled family against England, he would do all in his power to frustrate them; as, indeed, he had an opportunity of doing not long after. Never before, perhaps never

Digitized by Google

since, was there so cordial an understanding between England and France. Never could there have been a time when such an understanding was of greater importance to England.

At home the prospect seemed equally bright. Walpole had contrived to ingratiate himself more and more with the Prince of Wales, and had become his confidential adviser. Acting on his counsel, the Prince made his submission to the King; and acting on Stanhope's counsel, the King accepted it. The Sovereign and his heir had a meeting and were reconciled; for the time, at least. Walpole consented to join the administration, content for the present to fill the humble place of paymaster to the forces, without a seat in the Cabinet. He returned, in fact, to the ministerial position which he had first occupied, and from which he had been promoted, and must have seemed to himself somewhat in the position of a boy who, after having got high in his class, has got down very low again, and is well content to mount up a step or two from the humblest position. Walpole knew what he was doing, and must have been quite satisfied in his own mind that he was not likely to remain very long paymaster to the forces, although he could not by any possibility have anticipated the strange succession of events by which he was destined soon to be left without a rival. For the present he was in the administration, but he took little part in its actual work. He did not even appear to have any real concern in it. He spent as much of his time as he

Digitized by Google

could at Houghton, his pleasant country seat in Norfolk. Townshend, too, had been induced to join the administration. To him was assigned the position of president of the council.

Thus there appeared to be a truce to quarrels, and to enmities abroad and at home. There was no dispute with any of the great Continental powers; there was no dread of the Stuarts. Ministerial rivalries had been reduced to concordance and quiet; the traditional quarrel between the Sovereign and the heir apparent had been composed. It might have been thought that a time of peace and national prosperity had been assured. In the history of nations, however, we commonly find that nothing more certainly bodes unsettlement than a general conviction that everything is settled for ever.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XI.

'THE EARTH HATH BUBBLES.'

ONE of the comedies of Ben Jonson gives some vivid and humorous illustrations of the mania for projects, speculations, patents, and monopolies that at his time had taken possession of the minds of Englishmen. There is an enterprising person who declares that he can coin money out of cobwebs, raise wool upon egg-shells, and make grass grow out of marrow-bones. He has a project 'for the recovery of drowned land,' a scheme for a new patent for the dressing of dogskins for gloves, a plan for the bottling of ale, a device for making wine out of blackberries, and various other schemes cut and dry for what would now be called floating companies to make money. The civilised world is visited with this epidemic of project and speculation from time to time. In the reign of George the First such a mania attacked England much more fiercely than it had done even in the days of Ben Jonson. It came to us this time from France. The close of a great war is always a tempting and a favourable time for such enterprises. Finances are out of order; a season of spurious commercial activity has come to an end; new resources are to be sought for somehow; and

Digitized by Google

man must change to be other than he is when he wholly ceases to believe in financial miracle-working. There is an air of plausibility about most of the new projects ; and, indeed, like the scheme told of in Ben Jonson for the recovery of drowned lands, the enterprise is usually something within human power to accomplish, if only human skill could make it pay. The exchequer of France had been brought into a condition of something very like bankruptcy by the long and wasting war; and a projector was found who promised to supply the deficiency as boldly and as liberally as Mephistopheles does in the second part of 'Faust.' John Law, a Scotchman, and unquestionably a man of great ability and financial skill, had settled in France in consequence of having fought a duel and killed his man in his own country. Law set up a company which was to have a monopoly of the trade of the whole Mississippi region in North America, and on condition of the monopoly was to pay off the National Debt of France. A scheme of the kind within due limitations would have been reasonable enough, so far as the working of the Mississippi region was concerned ; but Law went on extending and extending the scope of its supposed operations, until it might almost as well have attempted to fold in the orb of the earth. The shares in his company went up with a sudden bound. He had the patronage of the Regent, and of all the Court circle. Gambling in shares became the fashion, the passion of Paris, and, indeed, of all France. Shares bought one day were sold at an immense advance the next,

Digitized by Google

or even the same day. Men and women nearly bankrupt in purse before suddenly found themselves in possession of large sums of money, for which they had to all appearance run no risk and made no sacrifice whatever. Princes and tradesmen, duchesses and sempstresses and harlots, clamoured, intrigued, and battled for shares. The offices in the Rue Quincampoix, a street then inhabited by bankers, stockbrokers, and exchange agents, were besieged all day long with crowds of eager competitors for shares. The street was choked with fine equipages, until it was found absolutely necessary to close it against all horses and carriages. All the rank and fashion of Paris flung itself into this game of speculation. Every one has heard the story of the hunchback who made a little fortune by the letting of his hump as a desk on which impatient speculators might scribble their applications for shares. A French novelist, M. Paul Feval, has made good use of this story, and London still remembers to what a brilliant dramatic account it was turned by Mr. Fechter. Law was the most powerful and the most courted man of his day. In his youth he had been a gallant and a free liver, a man of dress and fashion and intrigue, who delighted in scandalous entanglements with women. The fashion and beauty of Paris was for the hour at his feet. Think of a brilliant gallant who could make one rich in a moment! The mother of the Regent described in a coarse and pungent sentence the sort of homage which Parisian ladies would have been willing to pay to Law if he had so

Digitized by Google

desired. St. Simon, the mere *littérateur* and diplomatist, kept his head almost alone, and was not to be dazzled. Since the fable of Midas, he said, he had not heard of any one having the power to turn all he touched into gold, and he did not believe that virtue was given to M. Law. There is no doubt that Law was a man of great ability as a financier, and that his scheme in the beginning had promise in it. It was, as Burke has said of the scheme and its author, the public enthusiasm, and not Law himself, which chose to build on the base of his scheme a structure which it could not bear. It does not seem by any means certain that a project quite as wild might not be launched in London or Paris at the present day, and find almost as great a temporary success, and blaze, like Law's, the comet of a season. While the season lasted the comet blazed with a light that filled the social sky.

Law was for the time the most powerful man in France. A momentary whisper that he was out of health sent the funds down, and eclipsed the gaiety of nations. He was admitted into the Regent's privy council, and made Controller-general of the finances of France. The result was inevitable. There was as yet nothing behind the promises and the shares of the Mississippi Company. If finance could have gone on for ever promise-crammed, things would have been all right. But you cannot feed capons so, as Hamlet tells us; and you cannot long feed shareholders so. Law's scheme suddenly collapsed one day, and brought ruin on hundreds of thousands

Digitized by Google

in France. While, however, it was still afloat in air, its gaudy colours dazzled the eyes of the South Sea Company in England.

At the north-west end of Threadneedle Street, within view of the remains of Richard the Third's Palace of Crosby, stands a solid red-brick building, substantial, respectable, business-like, dignified with the dignity of some century and a half of existence. Time has softened and deepened its ruddy hue to a mellow, rich tone, contrasting pleasantly with the white copings and facings of its windows, and suggesting, agreeably, something of the smooth brown cloth and neat white linen of a well-to-do City gentleman of the last century. Yet that solemn, massive, prosperous-looking building is the enduring monument of one of the most gigantic shams on record, a sham and swindle that was the prolific parent of a whole brood of shams and swindles; for that building, with honesty and credit and mercantile honour written in its every line and angle, is all that remains of the South Sea House. It is a melancholy place. The Hall of the Kings at Karnak is hardly more melancholy or more ghost-haunted. Not that the house has now that 'desolation something like Balclutha's' which Charles Lamb attributed to it more than half a century ago. The place has changed greatly since Elia the Italian and Elia the Englishman were fellow-clerks at the South Sea House. Those dusty maps of Mexico, 'dim as dreams,' have long been taken away. The company itself, having outlived alike its fame and its infamy, lingering in-

Digitized by Google

appropriately like some guest that 'hath outstayed his welcome time,' was wound up at last within the memory of living men. The stately gateway no longer opens upon the 'grave court, with cloisters and pillars,' where South Sea stock so often changed hands. The cloisters and pillars have gone; the court has been converted into a hall of a sort of exchange, where merchants daily meet. The days of the desolation of the South Sea House are as much a thing of its past as its earlier splendour. Its corridors are now crowded with offices occupied by merchants of every nationality, from Scotland to Greece, and by companies connected with every portion of the globe. Only at night, on Saturday afternoons, and during the still peace of a City Sabbath, do the noise of men and the stir of business cease in the South Sea House. Yet, nevertheless, when one thinks of all that has happened there, of the dreams and hopes and miseries of which it was the begetter, it remains one of the most melancholy temples to folly that man has yet erected.

The South Sea Company had been established in 1710 by Harley himself, and was going along quietly and soberly enough for the time; but the example of the Mississippi Company was too strong for it. The South Sea Company, too, made to itself waxen wings, and prepared to fly above the clouds. The directors offered to relieve the State of its debt on condition of obtaining a monopoly of the South Sea trade. The nation was to take shares in the company in the first instance; and to deal with the

Digitized by Google

company, for its commercial and other wares, in the second; and by means of the exclusive dealing in shares and in products it was to pay off the National Debt. In other words, three men, all having nothing, and heavily in debt, were to go into exclusive dealings with each other, and were thus to make fortunes, discharge their liabilities, and live in luxury for the rest of their days. Stated thus, the proposition looks marvellously absurd. But it is not, in its essential conditions, more absurd than many a financial project which floats successfully for a time. Money-making, the hardest and most practical of all occupations, the task which can soonest be tested by results, is the business of all others in which men are most easily led astray, most greedy to be led astray. Sydney Smith speaks of a certain French lady whose whole nature cried out for her seduction. There are seasons when the whole nature of man seems to cry out for his financial seduction. The South Sea project expanded and inflated as the Mississippi scheme had done. Its temporary success turned the heads of the whole population.

Hundreds of schemes, still more wild, sprang into sudden existence. Some of the projects then put forward, and believed in, surpass in senseless extravagance anything satirised by Ben Jonson. So wild was the passion for new enterprises, that it seemed as if, at one time, anybody had only to announce any scheme, however preposterous, in order to find people competing for shares in it. The only condition of things in our own time that could be compared with

Digitized by Google

this epoch of insane speculation is the railway mania of 1846, when, for a brief season, George Hudson was king, and set up his hat in the market-place, and all England bowed down in homage to it. But the epidemic of speculation in the reign of the railway king was comparatively harmless and reasonable when compared with the midsummer madness of the South Sea scheme.

The South Sea scheme was brought before the notice of the House of Commons in 1720. The Chancellor of the Exchequer was Mr. Aislabie. We have already seen Mr. Aislabie as one of the secret committee who recommended the impeachment of Oxford and Bolingbroke. How well he was fitted for his office will appear from the fact that he was altogether taken in by the project, and by the financial arguments of those who brought it forward. Sunderland and Stanhope were taken in likewise—but there was nothing very surprising in that. A statesman of those days did not profess to understand anything about finance or economics, unless these subjects happened to belong to his department; and the statesman was exceptional who could honestly profess to understand them even when they did. Walpole, however, was a minister of a different order. He was the first of the line of statesmen-financiers. He saw through the bubble, and endeavoured to make others see as clearly as he did himself. Walpole assailed the project in a pamphlet, and opposed it strenuously in his place in Parliament. He was not at that time a minister of the Crown;

Digitized by Google

perhaps, if he had been, the South Sea Bill might never have been presented to Parliament; but the nation and the Parliament were off their heads just then. The caricaturists and the authors of lampoon verses positively found out the South Sea scheme before the financiers and men of the City.

On January 22, 1720, the House of Commons, sitting in what was then termed a Grand Committee, or what would now be called Committee of the whole House, took into consideration a proposal of the South Sea Company towards the redemption of the public debts. The proposal set forth that, 'the Corporation of the Governor and Company of Merchants of Great Britain, trading to the South Sea and other parts of America, and for encouraging the fishery, having under their consideration how they may be most serviceable to his Majesty and his Government, and to show their zeal and readiness to concur in the great and honourable design of reducing the national debts,' do 'humbly apprehend that if the public debts and annuities mentioned in the annexed estimate were taken into and made part of the capital stock of the said company, it would greatly contribute to that most desirable end.' The company then set forth the conditions under which they proposed to convert themselves into an agency for paying off the national debt, and making a profit for themselves.

The proposal fell somewhat short of the general expectation, which looked for nothing less than a sort of financial philosopher's stone. Besides, the

Digitized by Google

Bank of England was willing to compete with the South Sea Company. If the company could coin money out of cobwebs, why should not the Bank be able to accomplish the same feat? The friends of the Bank reminded the House of Commons of the great services which that corporation had rendered to the Government in the most difficult times, and urged, with much show of justice, that if any advantage was to be made by public bargains, the Bank should be preferred before a company that had never done anything for the nation. Well might Aislabie, the unfortunate Chancellor of the Exchequer, whose shame and ruin we shall soon come to tell of, exclaim in the speech which he made when defending himself for the second time before the House of Lords, that 'the spirit of bubbling had prevailed so universally, that the very Bank became a bubble—and this not by chance or necessity, or from any engagement to raise money for the public service, but from the same spirit that actuated Temple Mills or Garaway's Fishery.' In plain truth, as poor Aislabie pointed out, the Bank started a scheme in imitation of the South Sea Company, and the House of Commons gave time for its proper development. The Bank offered its scheme on February 1, and by that time the South Sea Company had seen their way to mend their hand and submit more attractive proposals. Then the Bank, not to be outrivalled, soon made a second proposal as well. The House took the rival propositions into consideration. Walpole was the chief advocate of the Bank. No

Digitized by Google

doubt he had come to the reasonable conclusion that if there could be any hope of success for such a scheme, it would be found in the Bank of England rather than in the South Sea Company. Mr. Aislabie, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, made himself the champion of the company, and assured the House that its propositions were of far greater advantage to the country than those of the Bank. Under his persuasive influence the House agreed to accept the tender, as we may call it, of the Company, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Secretary Craggs, and others, were ordered to prepare and bring in a Bill to give legislative sanction to the scheme.

The Bill passed the Commons, and went up to the House of Lords. To the credit of the Peers, it has to be said that they received it more doubtfully, and were slower to admit the certainty of its blessings, than the members of the representative chamber had been. Lord North and Gray condemned it as not only making way for, but actually countenancing and authorising 'the fraudulent and pernicious practice of stock-jobbing.' The Duke of Wharton declared that 'the artificial and prodigious rise of the South Sea stock was a dangerous bait, which might decoy many unwary people to their ruin, and allure them, by a false prospect of gain, to part with what they had got by their labour and industry, to purchase imaginary riches.' Lord Cowper said that the Bill, 'like the Trojan horse, was ushered in and received with great pomp and acclamations of joy, but was contrived for treachery and destruction.'

Digitized by Google

Lord Sunderland, however, spoke warmly in favour of the Bill, and contended that 'they who countenanced the scheme of the South Sea Company had nothing in their view but the easing the nation of part of that heavy load of debt it laboured under;' and argued that the scheme would enable the directors of the company at once to pay off the debt, and to secure large dividends to their shareholders. The Lords decided on admitting the South Sea Company's Trojan horse. Eighty-three votes were in favour of the Bill, and only seventeen against it. The Bill was read a third time on April 7, and received the Royal assent on June 11. The King's speech, delivered that day, at the close of the session, declared that 'the good foundation you have prepared this session for the payment of the national debts, and the discharge of a great part of them, without the least violation of the public faith, will, I hope, strengthen more and more the union I desire to see among all my subjects, and make our friendship yet more valuable to all foreign Powers.'

The immediate result of the Parliamentary authority thus given to what was purely a bubble scheme, was to bring upon the Legislature a perfect deluge of petitions from all manner of projectors. Patents and monopolies were sought for the carrying on of fisheries in Greenland and various other regions; for the growth, manufacture, and sale of hemp, flax, and cotton; for the making of sail-cloth; for a general insurance against fire; for the planting and rearing of madder to be used by dyers;

Digitized by Google

for the preparing and curing of Virginia tobacco for snuff, and making it into the same within all his Majesty's dominions. Schemes such as these were comparatively reasonable; but there were others of a different kind. Petitions were gravely submitted to Parliament praying for patents to be granted to the projectors of enterprises for trading in hair; for the universal supply of funerals to all parts of Great Britain; for insuring and increasing children's fortunes; for insuring masters and mistresses against losses from the carelessness or misconduct of servants; for insuring against thefts and robberies; for extracting silver from lead; for the transmutation of silver into malleable fine metal; for buying and fitting out ships to suppress pirates; for a wheel for perpetual motion, and—with which project perhaps we may close our list of specimens—'for carrying on an undertaking of great advantage, but nobody to know what it is.' Of course some of these projects were mere vulgar swindles. Even in that season of marvellous projection it is not to be supposed that the inventors of the last-mentioned scheme had any serious belief in its efficacy. The author of the project for the perpetual motion wheel was, we take it, a sincere personage and enthusiast. His scheme has been coming up again and again before the world since his time; and we have known good men who would have staked all they held dear in life upon the possibility of its realisation. But the would-be patentee of the undertaking of great advantage, nobody to know what it is, was a man of a different

Digitized by Google

order. He understood human nature in certain of its moods. He knew that there are men and women who can be got to believe in anything which holds out the promise of quick and easy gain. If he found a few dozen greedy and selfish fools to help his project with a little money, that would no doubt be the full attainment of his ends. Probably he was successful. The very boldness of his avowal of secrecy would have a charm for many. One day would be enough for him, the day when he sent in his demand for a patent. The bare demand would bring him dupes.

The first great blow struck at the South Sea Company came from the South Sea Company itself. Several bubble companies began to imitate the financial system which the more favoured institution had set up. The South Sea Company put in motion certain legal proceedings against some of the offenders. The South Sea Company had the support and countenance of the high legal authorities, and found no difficulty in obtaining injunctions against the other associations, directing them not to go beyond the strict legal privileges secured to them by their charters of incorporation. Among the undertakings thus admonished were the English Copper Company and the Welsh Copper and Lead Company. His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales happened to be a governor of the English Copper Company, and the Lords Justices were polite enough to send the Prince a message expressing the great regret they felt at having to declare illegal an enterprise with which he was connected. The Prince, not to be out-

Digitized by Google

done in politeness, received the admonition, we are told, 'very graciously,' and sent on his part a message to the Company requesting them to accept his resignation, and to elect someone else a governor in his place. The proceedings which the South Sea Company had set on foot against their audacious rivals and imitators had, however, the inconvenient effect of directing too much of public attention to the principles upon which they conducted their own business. Confidence began to waver, to be shaken, to give way altogether; and when people ask whether a speculation is a bubble, the bubble, if it is one, is already burst.

The whole basis of Law's system, and of the South Sea Company's schemes as well, was the principle that the prosperity of a nation is increased in proportion to the quantity of money in circulation; and that as no state can have gold enough for all its commercial transactions, paper money may be issued to an unlimited extent, and its full value maintained without its being convertible at pleasure into hard cash. This supposed principle has been proved again and again to be a mere fallacy and paradox; but it always finds enthusiastic believers who have plausible arguments in its support. It appears, indeed, to have a singular fascination for some persons in all times and communities. It might seem an obvious truism that under no possible conditions can people in general be got to give as much for a promise to pay as for a certain and instant payment; and yet this truism would have to be proved a falsehood in

Digitized by Google

order to establish a basis for such a project as that of Law. Even were the basis to be established, the project would then have to be worked fairly and honestly out, which was not done either in the case of the Mississippi Company or of the South Sea Company. If each had been founded on a true financial principle, each was worked in a false and fraudulent way. At its best the South Sea Company in its later development would have been a bubble. Worked as it actually was, it proved to be a swindle. A committee of secrecy was appointed by the House of Commons to inquire into the condition of the company. The committee found that false and fictitious entries had been made in the company's books; that leaves had been torn out; that some books had been destroyed altogether, and that others had been carried off and secreted. The vulgar arts of the card-sharper and the thimble-rigger had been prodigally employed to avert detection and ruin by the directors of a company which was promoted and protected by ministers of State and by the favourites of the King.

Some idea of the wide-spread nature of the disaster which was inflicted by the wreck of the company may be formed from a rapid glance at some of the petitions for redress and relief which were presented to the House of Commons. We find among them petitions from the counties of Hertford, Dorset, Essex, Buckingham, Derby; the cities of Bristol, Exeter, Lincoln; the boroughs of Oakhampton, Amersham, Bedford, Chipping Wycombe, Abingdon, Sudbury, East Retford, Evesham, Newark-

Digitized by Google

upon-Trent, Newbury, and many other places. We have purposely omitted to take account of any of the London communities. The wildest excitement prevailed; and it is characteristic of the time to note that the national calamity—for it was no less—aroused fresh hopes in the minds of the Jacobites. Such a calamity, such a scandal, it was thought, could not but bring shame and ruin upon the Whig ministers, and through them discredit on the Sovereign and the Court. It was believed, it was hoped, that Sunderland would be found to be implicated in the swindle. Why should not such a crisis, such a humiliation to the Whigs, be the occasion of a new and a more successful attempt on the part of the Jacobites? The King was again in Hanover. He was summoned home in hot haste. On December 8, 1720, the two Houses of Parliament were assembled to hear the reading of the Royal speech proroguing the session; and in the speech the King was made to express his concern 'for the unhappy turn of affairs which has so much affected the public credit at home,' and to recommend most earnestly to the House of Commons 'that you consider of the most effectual and speedy methods to restore the national credit, and fix it upon a lasting foundation.' 'You will, I doubt not,' the speech went on to say, 'be assisted in so commendable and necessary a work by every man that loves his country.' A week or so before the royal speech was read, on November 30, 1720, Charles Edward, eldest son of James Stuart, was born at Rome. The undaunted mettle of Atterbury came

Digitized by Google

into fresh and vigorous activity with the birth of the Stuart heir, and the apparently imminent ruin of the Whig ministers.

Robert Walpole had been spending some time peacefully at his country place, Houghton, in Norfolk. Hunting, bull-baiting, and drinking were the principal amusements with which Walpole entertained his guests there. Sometimes the guests were persons of royal rank: Walpole once entertained the Grand Duke of Tuscany. Sometimes the throng of his visitors and his neighbours to the hunting-field could only be compared, says a letter written at the time, to an army in its march. Walpole never lost sight, however, of what was going on in the metropolis. He used to send a trusty Norfolk man as his express messenger to run all the way on foot from Houghton to London, and carry letters for him to confidential friends, and bring him back the answers. When he found how badly things were going in London on the bursting of the South Sea bubble, he hastened up to town. His presence was sadly needed there. It is not without interest to think of James Stuart in Rome, and Walpole in Houghton, both keeping their eyes fixed on the gradual exposure of the South Sea swindle, and both alike hoping to find their account in the national calamity. All the advantage was with the statesman and not with the Prince. The English people of all opinions and creeds were tolerably well assured that if any one could help them out of the difficulty, Walpole could; and it required the faith of the most devoted Jacobite to

Digitized by Google

make any man of business believe that the return of the exiled Stuarts could do much to keep off national bankruptcy. Walpole had waited long. His time was now come at last.

Walpole had kept his head cool during the days when the Company was soaring to the skies; he kept his head equally cool when it came down with a crash. 'He had never,' he said in the House of Commons, 'approved of the South Sea scheme, and was sensible it had done a great deal of mischief; but, since it could not be undone, he thought it the duty of all good men to give their helping hand towards retrieving it; and, with this view, he had already bestowed some thoughts on a proposal to restore public credit, which at the proper time he would submit to the wisdom of the House.' Walpole had made money by the South Sea scheme. The sound knowledge of the principles of finance which enabled him to see that the enterprise thus conducted could not pay in the end enabled him also to see that it could pay up to a certain point, and when that point had been reached he quietly sold out and saved his gains. The King's mistresses and their relatives also made good profit out of the transactions. The Prince of Wales was a gainer by some of the season's speculations. But when the crash came the ruin was wide-spread; it amounted to the proportions of a national calamity. The ruling classes raged and stormed against the vile conspirators who had disappointed them in their expectations of coining money out of cobwebs. The Lords and Commons held inquiries, passed resolu-

Digitized by Google

tions, demanded impeachments. It was soon made manifest beyond all doubt that members of the Government had been scandalously implicated in the worst parts of the fraudulent speculations. Mr. Aislabie, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, was only too clearly shown to be one of the leading delinquents. Mr. Craggs, the father, Postmaster-General, and James Craggs, the son, Secretary of State, were likewise involved. Both were remarkable men. The father had begun life as a common barber, and partly by capacity and partly by the thrift that follows fawning had made his way up in the world, until he reached the height from which he was suddenly and so ignominiously to fall. It was hardly worth the trouble thus to toil and push and climb, only to tumble down with such shame and ruin. Craggs the father had had great transfers of South Sea stock made to him, for which he never paid. Craggs the son, the Secretary of State, had acted as the go-between in the transactions of the Company with the King's mistresses, whereby the influence of these ladies was purchased for a handsome consideration. Charles Stanhope, one of the Secretaries to the Treasury, and cousin of the Minister, was shown to have received large value in the stock of the Company for which he never paid. The most ghastly ruin fell on some of these men. Craggs the younger died suddenly on the very day when the report incriminating him was read in the House of Commons. Craggs the father poisoned himself a few days afterwards. Pope wrote an epitaph on the son, in which he described him as—

Digitized by Google

Statesman, yet friend of truth; of soul sincere,
In action faithful and in honour clear;
Who broke no promise, served no private end,
Who gained no title, and who lost no friend.

Epitaphs seem to have been genuine tributes of personal friendship in those days; they had no reference to merit or to truth. One's friend had every virtue because he was one's friend. Secret committees might condemn, Parliament might degrade, juries might convict, impartial history might stigmatise; but one's friend remained one's friend all the same, and if one had the gift of verse, was to be held up to the admiration of time and eternity in a glorifying epitaph. We have fallen on more prosaic days now; the living admirer of a modern Craggs would leave his epitaph unwritten if he could not make facts and feelings fit better in together.

A better and more eminent man than Aislabie or either Craggs lost his life in consequence of the South Sea calamity. No one had accused, or even suspected, Lord Stanhope of any share in the financial swindle. Even the fact that his cousin was one of those accused of guilty complicity with it did not induce any one to believe that the Minister of State had any share in the guilt. Yet Stanhope was one of the first victims of the crisis. The Duke of Wharton, son of the late Minister, had just come of age. He was already renowned as a brilliant, audacious profligate. He was president of the Hell-fire Club; he and some of his comrades were the nightly terror of London streets. Wharton thought fit to make himself the champion of public purity in the debates on the South Sea

Digitized by Google

Company's ruin. He attacked the Ministers fiercely; he attacked Stanhope in especial. Stanhope replied to him with far greater warmth than the weight of any attack from Wharton would seem to have called for. Excited beyond measure, Stanhope burst a blood-vessel in his anger. He was carried home, and he died the next day—February 5, 1721. His life had been pure and noble. He was a sincere lover of his country; a brave and often a successful soldier; a statesman of high purpose if not of the most commanding talents. His career as a soldier was brought to a close when he had to capitulate to that master of war and profligacy, the Duke de Vendôme; an encounter of a different kind with another brilliant profligate robbed him of his life.

The House of Commons promptly passed a series of resolutions declaring 'John Aislabie, Esquire, a Member of this House, then Chancellor of the Exchequer and one of the Commissioners of his Majesty's Treasury,' guilty of 'most notorious, dangerous, and infamous corruption,' and ordering his expulsion from the House and his committal as a prisoner to the Tower. This resolution was carried without a dissentient word. The House of Commons went on next to consider that part of the report which applied to Lord Sunderland, and a motion was made declaring that 'after the proposals of the South Sea Company were accepted by this House, and a Bill ordered to be brought in thereupon, and before such Bill passed, 50,000*l.* of the capital stock of the South Sea Company was taken in by Robert Knight, late

Digitized by Google

cashier of the said company, for the use and upon the account of Charles, Earl of Sunderland, a Lord of Parliament and First Commissioner of the Treasury, without any valuable consideration paid, or sufficient security given, for payment for or acceptance of the same.'

Sunderland had too many friends, however, and too much influence to be dealt with as if he were Aislabie. A fierce debate sprang up. The evidence against him was not by any means so clear as in the case of Aislabie. There was room for a doubt as to Sunderland's personal knowledge of all that had been done in his name. His influence and power secured him the full benefit of the doubt. The motion implicating him was rejected by a majority of 233 votes against 172, 'which, however,' says a contemporary account, 'occasioned various reasonings and reflections.' Charles Stanhope, too, was lucky enough to get off, on a division, by a very narrow majority.

A letter from an English traveller at Rome to his father, bearing date May 6, 1721, and privately printed this year (1884) for the first time, under the auspices of the Clarendon Society, of Edinburgh, gives an interesting account of the reception of the writer, an English Protestant, by James Stuart and his wife. That part of the letter which is of present interest to us tells of the remarks made by James on the subject of the South Sea catastrophe. James spoke of the investigations of the secret committee, from which he had no great hopes; for, he said, the authors of the calamity 'would find means to be above the

Digitized by Google

common course of justice.' 'Some may imagine, continued he, 'that these calamities are not displeasing to me because they may in some measure turn to my advantage. I renounce all such unworthy thoughts. The love of my country is the first principle of my worldly wishes, and my heart bleeds to see so brave and honest a people distressed and misled by a few wicked men, and plunged into miseries almost irretrievable.' 'Thereupon,' says the writer of the letter, 'he rose briskly from his chair, and expressed his concern with fire in his eyes.'

Exiled sovereigns are in the habit of expressing concern for their country with fire in their eyes; they are also in the habit of regarding their own return to power as the one sole means of relieving the country from its distress. The English gentleman who describes this scene represents himself as not to be outdone in patriotism of his own even by the exiled Prince. 'I could not disavow much of what he said; yet I own I was piqued at it, for very often compassionate terms from the mouth of an adverse party are grating. It appeared to me so on this occasion; therefore I replied, "It's true, sir, that our affairs in England lie at present under many hardships by the South Seas mismanagement; but it is a constant maxim with us Protestants to undergo a great deal for the security of our religion, which we could not depend upon under a Romish Government."' This speech, not over-polite, the Prince took in good part, and entered upon an argument so skilfully, 'that I am apprehensive I should become half a Jacobite if I

Digitized by Google

should continue following these discourses any longer.' 'Therefore,' says the writer, 'I will give you my word I will enter no more upon arguments of this kind with him.' The Prince and his visitor were perhaps both playing a part to some extent, and the whole discourse was probably a good deal less theatric in style than the English traveller has reported. But there can be no doubt that the letter fairly illustrates the spirit in which the leading Jacobites watched over the financial troubles in England, and the new hopes with which they were inspired—hopes destined to be translated into new action before very long. Nor can it be denied that the speech of the English visitor correctly represented the feeling which was growing stronger day after day in the minds of prudent people at home in England. The time was coming—had almost come—when a political disturbance or a financial panic in these kingdoms was to be accounted sufficient occasion for a change of Ministers, but not for a revolution.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XII.

AFTER THE STORM.

SWIFT wrote more than one poem on the South Sea mania. That which was written in 1721, and is called 'South Sea,' is a wonder of wit and wisdom. It shows the hollowness of the scheme in some new, odd, and striking light in every metaphor and every verse. 'A guinea,' Swift reminds his readers, 'will not pass at market for a farthing more, shown through a multiplying glass, than what it always did before.'

> So cast it in the Southern Seas,
> And view it through a jobber's bill,
> Put on what spectacles you please,
> Your guinea's but a guinea still.

Other poets had not as much prudence and sound sense as Swift. Pope put some of his money, a good deal of it, into South Sea stock, contrary to the earnest advice of Atterbury, and lost it. Swift reflected faithfully the temper of the time in savage verses, which call out for the punishment by death of the fraudulent directors of the company. Antæus, Swift tells us, was always restored to fresh strength as often as he touched the earth; Hercules subdued him at last by holding him up in the air and strangling him there. Suspended a while in the air,

Digitized by Google

according to the same principle, our directors, he admonishes the country, will be properly tamed and dealt with. Many public enemies of the directors gave themselves credit for moderation and humanity on the ground that they would not have the culprits tortured to death, but merely executed in the ordinary way.

Walpole set himself first of all to restore public credit. His object was not so much the punishment of fraudulent directors as the tranquillising of the public mind, and the subsidence of national panic. He proposed one measure in the first instance to accomplish this end; but that not being sufficiently comprehensive, he introduced another Bill, which was finally adopted by both Houses of Parliament. Briefly described, this scheme so adjusted the financial affairs of the South Sea Company, that five millions of the seven which the directors had agreed to pay the public were remitted; the encumbrances to the company were cleared off to a certain extent by the confiscation of the estates of the fraudulent directors; the credit of the company's bonds was maintained; thirty-three pounds six shillings and eightpence per cent. were divided amongst the proprietors, and two millions were reserved towards the liquidation of the National Debt. The company was, therefore, put into a position to carry out its various public engagements, and the panic was soon over. Many of the proprietors of the company complained bitterly of the manner in which they had been treated by Walpole. The lobbies of the House of Commons

Digitized by Google

and all the adjacent places were crowded by proprietors of the short annuities and other redeemable popular deeds; men and women who, as the contemporary accounts tell us, 'in a rude and insolent manner demanded justice of the members as they went into the House,' and put into their hands a paper with the words written on it, 'Pray do justice to the annuitants who lent their money on Parliamentary security.' 'The noisy multitude,' we are told, 'were particularly rude to Mr. Comptroller, tearing part of his coat as he passed by.' The Speaker of the House was informed that a crowd of people had got together in a riotous and tumultuous manner in the lobbies and passages, and he ordered 'that the Justices of the Peace for the City of Westminster do immediately attend this House, and bring the constables with them.' While the Justices and the constables were being sent for, Sir John Ward was presenting to the House a petition from the proprietors of the redeemable funds, setting forth that they had lent their money to the South Sea Company on Parliamentary security; that they had been unwarily drawn into subscribing for the shares in the company by the artifices of the directors; and they prayed that they might be heard by themselves or their counsel against Walpole's measure—the Bill 'for making several provisions to restore the public credit, which suffers by the frauds and mismanagement of the late South Sea directors and others.' Walpole opposed the petition, and said he did not see how the petitioners could be relieved,

Digitized by Google

seeing that the resolutions, in pursuance of which his Bill was brought in, had been approved by the King and council, and by a great majority of the House. Walpole, therefore, moved that the debate be adjourned, in order to get rid of the matter. The motion was carried by seventy-eight voices against twenty-nine. By this time four Justices for the City of Westminster had arrived, and were brought to the bar of the House. The Speaker informed them that there was a great crowd of riotous people in the lobbies and passages, and that he was commanded by the House to direct them to go and disperse the crowd, and take care to prevent similar riots in the future. The four Justices, attended by five or six constables, desired the petitioners to clear the lobbies ; and when they refused to do so, caused a proclamation against rioters to be twice read, warning them at the same time that if they remained until the third reading, they would have to incur the penalties of the Act. What the penalties of the Act were, and what the four Justices and five or six constables could have done with the petitioners if the petitioners had refused to listen to reason, do not seem very clear. The petitioners, however, did listen to reason, and dispersed before the fatal third reading of the proclamation. But they did not disperse without giving the House of Commons and the Justices a piece of their mind. Many exclaimed that they had come as peaceable citizens and subjects to represent their grievances, and had not expected to be used like a mob and scoundrels ; and others, as they went out, shouted

Digitized by Google

to the members of Parliament, 'You first pick our pockets, and then send us to gaol for complaining.'

The Bill went up to the House of Lords on Monday, August 7, and the Lords agreed to it without an amendment. On Thursday, August 10, Parliament was prorogued. The Lord Chancellor read the King's speech. 'The common calamity,' said his Majesty, 'occasioned by the wicked execution of the South Sea scheme, was become so very great before your meeting, that the providing proper remedies for it was very difficult. But it is a great comfort to me to observe that public credit now begins to recover, which gives me the greatest hopes that it will be entirely restored when all the provisions you have made for that end shall be duly put in execution.' The speech went on to tell of his Majesty's 'great compassion for the sufferings of the innocent and a just indignation against the guilty;' and added that the King had readily given his assent 'to such Bills as you have presented to me for punishing the authors of our late misfortunes, and for obtaining the restitution and satisfaction due to those who have been injured by them in such manner as you judged proper.' Certainly there was no lack of severity in the punishment inflicted on the fraudulent directors. Their estates were confiscated with such rigour that some of them were reduced to miserable poverty. They were disqualified from ever holding any public place or office whatever, and from ever having a seat in Parliament. Yet, severely as they were punished, the outcry of the public at the time was that they had

Digitized by Google

been let off far too easily. Walpole was denounced because he did not carry their punishment much farther. There was even a ridiculous report spread abroad that he had defended Sunderland and screened the directors from the most ignoble and sordid motives, and that he had been handsomely paid for his compromise with crime. Nothing would have satisfied some of the sufferers by the South Sea scheme short of the execution of its principal directors. Even the scaffold, however, could hardly have dealt more stern and summary justice on the criminals—as some of them undoubtedly were—than did the actual course of events. When the storm cleared away Aislabie was ruined; Craggs, the Postmaster-General, was dead; Craggs, the Secretary of State, was dead; Lord Stanhope, who was really innocent—was really unsuspected of any share in the crimes of the fraudulent directors—was dead also; Sunderland was no longer a Minister of State, and the shadow of death was already on him. It was not merely the bursting of a bubble; it was the bursting of a shell—it mutilated or killed those who stood around and near.

By the time of the new elections—for Parliament had now nearly run its course—public tranquillity was entirely restored. Parliament was dissolved in March 1722, and the new elections left Walpole and his friends in power, with an immense majority at their back. Long before the new Parliament had time to assemble Lord Sunderland suddenly died of heart disease. On April 19, 1722, his death took place, and it was so unexpected that a wild outcry was

Digitized by Google

raised by some of his friends, who insisted that his enemies had poisoned him. The medical examination proved, however, that Sunderland's disease was one which might at any moment of excitement have brought on his death. Nearly all the leading public men who, innocent or guilty, had been mixed up with the evil schemes of the South Sea Company were now in the grave.

The field seemed now clear and open to Walpole. The death of Sunderland, following so soon on that of Stanhope, had left him apparently without a rival. Sunderland had been to the last a political, and even a personal, enemy of Walpole. Although Walpole had gone so far to protect Sunderland against the House of Commons and against public opinion, with regard to his share in the South Sea Company's transactions, Sunderland could not forgive Walpole because Walpole was rising higher in the State—because he was, in fact, the greater man. Though Sunderland was compelled by public opinion to resign office, he had contrived, up to the hour of his death, to maintain his influence over the mind of King George. Fortunately for George, the King had too much clear, robust good sense not to recognise the priceless worth of Walpole's advice and Walpole's services. Sunderland tried one ingenious artifice to get rid of Walpole. He suggested to George that Walpole's merits required some special and permanent recognition, and he recommended that the King should create Walpole Postmaster-General for life. Such an office, indeed, would

Digitized by Google

have brought Walpole an ample revenue, supposing he stood in need of money, which he did not, but it would have disqualified him for ever for a seat in Parliament. Perhaps no better illustration of Sunderland's narrow intellect and utter lack of judgment could be found than the supposition that this shallow trick could succeed, and that the greatest administrator of his time could be thus quietly withdrawn from Parliamentary life and from the higher work of the State, and shelved in perpetuity as a Postmaster-General. King George was not to be taken in after this fashion. He asked Sunderland whether Walpole wished for such an office, or was acquainted with Sunderland's intention to make the suggestion. Sunderland had to answer both questions in the negative. 'Then,' said the King, 'pray do not make him any such offer, or say anything about it to him. I had to part with him once, much against my will, and, so long as he is willing to serve me, I will never part with him again.' This incident shows that, if Sunderland had lived, he would have plotted against Walpole to the end, and would have stood in Walpole's way to the best of his power, and with all the unforgiving hostility of the narrow-minded and selfish man who has had services rendered him for which he ought to feel grateful, but cannot.

A far greater man than Sunderland was soon to pass away.

From Marlborough's eyes the streams of dotage flow.

These are the famous words in which Johnson depicts the miserable decay of a great spirit, and points anew

Digitized by Google

the melancholy moral of the vanity of human wishes. Hardly a line in the poetry of our language is better known or more often quoted. Where did Johnson get the idea that Marlborough had sunk into dotage before his death? There is not the slightest foundation for such a belief. All that we know of Marlborough's closing days tells us the contrary. Nothing in Marlborough's life, not even his serene disregard of dangers and difficulties, not even his victories, became him like to the leaving of it. No great man ever sank more gracefully, more gently, with a calmer spirit, down to his rest. We get some charming pictures of Marlborough's closing days. Death had given him warning by repeated paralytic strokes. On November 27, 1721, he was seen for the last time in the House of Lords. He was not, however, quite near his death even then. He used to spend his time at Blenheim, or at his lodge in Windsor. To the last he was fond of riding and driving and the fresh country air. Indoors he loved to be surrounded by his granddaughters and their young friends, and to join in games of cards and other amusements with them. They used to get up private theatricals to gratify the gentle old warrior. We hear of a version of Dryden's 'All for Love' being thus performed. The Duchess of Marlborough had cut out of the play its unseemly passages, and even its too amorous expressions—the reader will probably think there was not much left of the piece when this work of purification had been accomplished—and she would not allow any embracing to be performed. The

Digitized by Google

gentleman who played Mark Antony wore a sword which had been presented to Marlborough by the Emperor. The part of the high priest was played by a pretty girl, a friend of Marlborough's granddaughters, and she wore as high priest's robe what seems to have been a lady's night-dress gorgeously embroidered with special devices for the occasion. A prologue, written by Dr. Hoadly, was read, in which the glories of the great Duke's career were glowingly recounted. Some painter, it seems to us, might make a pretty picture of this; the great hall in Blenheim turned into a theatre, the handsome young men and pretty girls enacting their chastened parts, the fading old hero looking at the scene with pleased and kindly eyes, and the imperious, loving old Duchess turning her devoted gaze on him.

So fades, so languishes, grows dim, and dies the conqueror of Blenheim, the greatest soldier England ever had since the days when kings ceased to be as a matter of right her chiefs in command. In the early days of June 1722 Marlborough was stricken by another paralytic seizure, and this was his last. He was in full possession of his senses to the end, perfectly conscious and calm. He knew that he was dying; he had prayers read to him; he conveyed in many tender ways his feelings of affection for his wife, and of hope for his own future. At four in the morning of June 16 his life ebbed quietly away. He was in his seventy-second year when he died. None of the great deeds of his life belong to this history; none of that life's worst offences have much to do with it.

Digitized by Google

Marlborough's career seems to us absolutely faultless in two of its aspects; as a commander and as a husband we can only give him praise. He was probably a greater commander than even the Duke of Wellington. If he never had to encounter a Napoleon, he had to meet and triumph over difficulties which never came in Wellington's way. It was not Wellington's fate to have to strive against political treachery of the basest kind on the part of English Ministers of State. Wellington's enemies were all in the field arrayed against him; Marlborough had to fight the foreign enemy on the battle-field, and to struggle meanwhile against the persistent treachery of the still more formidable enemy at home in the council-chamber of his own sovereign. Perhaps, indeed, Wellington's nature would not have permitted him to succeed under such difficulties. Wellington could hardly have met craft with craft, and, it must be added, falsehood with falsehood, as Marlborough did. We have said in this book already that even for that age of double-dealing Marlborough was a surprising double-dealer, and there were many passages in his career which are evidences of an astounding capacity for deceit. 'He was a great man,' said his enemy, Lord Peterborough, 'and I have forgotten his faults.' Historians would gladly do the same if they could; would surely dwell with much more delight on the virtues and the greatness than on the defects. The English people were generous to Marlborough, and in the way which, it has to be confessed, was most welcome to him. But if a very treasure-house

Digitized by Google

of gold could not have satisfied his love of money, let it be added that the national treasure-house itself, were it poured out at his feet, could not have over-paid the services which he had rendered to his country.

Marlborough left no son to inherit his honours and his fortune. His titles and estates descended to his eldest daughter, the Countess of Godolphin. She died without leaving a son, and the titles and estates passed over to the Earl of Sunderland, the son and heir of Marlborough's second daughter, at that time long dead. From the day when the victor of Blenheim died, there has been no Duke of Marlborough distinguished in anything but the name. Not one of the world's great soldiers, it would seem, was destined to have a great soldier for a son. From great statesman fathers sometimes spring great statesman sons; but Alexander, Hannibal, Julius Cæsar, Charles the Twelfth, Alexander Farnese, Clive, Marlborough, Frederick, Napoleon, Wellington, Washington, left to the world no heir of their greatness.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BANISHMENT OF ATTERBURY.

On Thursday, August 9, 1722, the 'pompous solemnity' of Marlborough's funeral took place. The great procession went from the Duke's house in St. James's Park, through St. James's and the Upper Park to Hyde Park Corner, and thence through Piccadilly, St. James's Street, Pall Mall, Charing Cross, and King Street to Westminster Abbey. A small army of soldiers guarded the remains of the greatest warrior of his age; a whole heralds' college clustered about the lofty funeral banner on which all the arms of the Churchills were quartered. Marlborough's friends and admirers, his old brothers in arms, the companions of his victories, followed his coffin, and listened while Garter King-at-Arms, bending over the open grave, said: 'Thus it hath pleased Almighty God to take out of this transitory life unto His mercy the most high, most mighty, and most noble prince, John Churchill, Duke and Earl of Marlborough.'

In Applebee's 'Weekly Journal' for Saturday, August 11, two days after the funeral, we are told that the Duchess of Marlborough, in honour of the memory of her life-long lover, had offered a prize of

Digitized by Google

five hundred pounds for a Latin epitaph to be inscribed upon his tomb, and that 'several poets have already taken to their lofty studies to contend for the prize.'

At Marlborough's funeral we see for the last time in high public estate one of the few Englishmen of the day who could properly be named in the same breath with Marlborough. This was Francis Atterbury, the eloquent and daring Bishop of Rochester. Atterbury came up to town for the purpose of officiating at the funeral of the great Duke. On July 30, 1722, he wrote from the country to his friend Pope, announcing his visit to London. 'I go to-morrow,' Atterbury writes, 'to the Deanery, and I believe I shall stay there till I have said dust to dust, and shut up this last scene of pompous vanity.' Atterbury does not seem to have been profoundly impressed with the religious solemnity of the occasion. His was not a very reverential spirit. There was as little of the temper of pious sanctity in Atterbury as in Swift himself. The allusion to the last scene of pompous vanity might have had another significance, as well as that which Atterbury meant to give to it. Amid the pomp in which Marlborough's career went out the career of Atterbury went out as well, although in a different way, and not closed sublimely by death. After the funeral, Atterbury went to the Deanery at Westminster—he was Dean of Westminster as well as Bishop of Rochester—and there, on August 24, the day but one after the scene of pompous vanity, he was

Digitized by Google

arrested by the Under-Secretary of State, accompanied by two officers of justice, and was brought, along with all papers of his which the officers could seize, before the Privy Council. He underwent an examination, as the result of which he was committed to the Tower, on a charge of having been concerned in a treasonable conspiracy to dethrone the King, and to bring back the House of Stuart. In the Tower he was left to languish for many a long day before it was found convenient to bring him to trial.

England was startled by the disclosures which followed Atterbury's arrest. On Tuesday, October 9, 1722, the sixth Parliament of Great Britain—the sixth, that is to say, since the union with Scotland—met at Westminster. The House of Commons, on the motion of Mr. Pulteney, elected Mr. Spencer Compton their Speaker, and on the next day but one, October 11, the Royal speech was read. The King was present in person, but the speech was read by the Lord Chancellor, for the good reason which we have already mentioned, that his Majesty the King of England could not speak the English language. The speech opened with a startling announcement. 'My Lords and Gentlemen,' so ran the words of the Sovereign, 'I am concerned to find myself obliged, at the opening of this Parliament, to acquaint you that a dangerous conspiracy has been for some time formed, and is still carrying on, against my person and government, in favour of a Popish predender.' 'Some of the conspirators,' the speech

Digitized by Google

went on to say, 'have been taken up and secured, and endeavours are used for the apprehending others.' When the speech was read, and the King had left the House, the Duke of Grafton, then Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, brought in a Bill for suspending the Habeas Corpus Act, and empowering the Government to secure and detain 'such persons as his Majesty shall suspect are conspiring against his person and government, for the space of one year.' The motion to read the Bill a second time in the same sitting was strenuously resisted by a considerable minority of the Peers. A warm debate took place, and in the end the second reading was carried by a majority of 67 against 24. The debate was renewed upon the other stages of the Bill, which were taken in rapid succession. The proposal of the Government was, of course, carried in the end; but it met with a resistance in the House of Lords which certainly would not have been offered to such a proposal by any member of the hereditary chamber in our day. Some of the recorded protests of dissentient peers read more like the utterances of modern Radicals than those of influential members of the House of Lords. The strongest objection made to the proposal was that the utmost term for which the Constitution had previously been suspended was six months, and that the measure to suspend it for a year would become an authority for suspending it at some future time for two years, or three years, or any term which might please the ministers in power. On Monday, October 15, the Bill was brought down to

Digitized by Google

the Commons, and was read a first time on the motion of Walpole. The Bill was passed in the Commons, not, indeed, without opposition, but with an opposition much less strenuous and influential than that which had been offered to it in the House of Lords. On October 17 it was announced to Parliament that Dr. Atterbury, the Bishop of Rochester, the Lord North and Grey, and the Earl of Orrery, had been committed to the Tower on a charge of high treason. A few days after, a similar announcement was made about the arrest and committal of the Duke of Norfolk.

By far the most important of the persons committed for trial was the Bishop of Rochester. Francis Atterbury may rank among the most conspicuous public men of his time. He stands only just beneath Marlborough, and Bolingbroke, and Walpole. Steele, in his sixty-sixth *Tatler* pays a high tribute to Atterbury: 'He has so much regard to his congregation, that he commits to memory what he has to say to them, and has so soft and graceful a behaviour, that it must attract your attention. His person, it is to be confessed, is no slight recommendation; but he is to be highly commended for not losing that advantage, and adding to a propriety of speech which might pass the criticism of Longinus an action which would have been approved by Demosthenes. He has a peculiar force in his way, and has many of his audience who could not be intelligent hearers of his discourse were there not explanation as well as grace in his action. This art of his is used with the

Digitized by Google

most exact and honest skill; he never attempts your passions until he has convinced your reason; all the objections which he can form are laid open and dispersed before he uses the least vehemence in his sermon; but when he thinks he has your head he very soon wins your heart, and never pretends to show the beauty of holiness until he hath convinced you of the truth of it.'

Atterbury had, however, among his many gifts a dangerous gift of political intrigue. Like Swift, and Dubois, and Alberoni, he was at least as much statesman as churchman. He had mixed himself up in various intrigues—some of them could hardly be called conspiracies—for the restoration of the Stuarts, and when at last something like a new conspiracy was planned, it was not likely that he would be left out of it. He had courage enough for any such scheme. There was no great difficulty in finding out the new plot which King George mentioned in his speech to Parliament; for James Stuart had revealed it himself by a proclamation which he caused to be circulated among his supposed adherents in England, renewing in the boldest terms his claim to the crown of England. A sort of junto of Jacobites appears to have been established in England to make arrangements for a new attempt on the part of James; the noblemen whom King George had arrested were understood to be among its leading members. Atterbury was charged with having taken a prominent if not, indeed, a foremost part in the conspiracy. The Duke of Norfolk, Lord North and

Digitized by Google

Grey, and Lord Orrery were afterwards discharged for want of evidence to convict them. The arrest of a number of humbler conspirators led to the discovery of a correspondence asserted to have been carried on between Atterbury and the adherents of James Stuart in France and Italy.

Both Houses of Parliament began by voting addresses of loyalty and gratitude to the King, and by resolving that the proclamation entitled 'Declaration of James the Third, King of England, Scotland, and Ireland, to all his loving subjects of the three nations,' and signed, 'James Rex,' was 'a false, insolent, and traitorous libel,' and should be burnt by the hands of the common hangman under the direction of the sheriffs of London. This important ceremonial was duly carried out at the Royal Exchange. Then the House of Commons voted, 'that towards raising the supply, and reimbursing to the public the great expenses occasioned by the late rebellions and disorders, the sum of one hundred thousand pounds be raised and levied upon the real and personal estates of all Papists, Popish recusants, or persons educated in the Popish religion, or whose parents are Papists, or who shall profess the Popish religion, in lieu of all forfeitures already incurred for or upon account of their recusancy.' This singular method of infusing loyalty into the Roman Catholics of England was not allowed to be adopted without serious and powerful resistance in the House of Commons. The idea was not to devise a new penalty for the Catholics, but to put in actual

Digitized by Google

operation the terms of a former penalty pronounced against them in Elizabeth's time, and not then pressed into execution. This fact was dwelt upon with much emphasis by the advocates of the penal motion. Why talk of religious persecution? they asked. This is not religious persecution; it is only putting in force an edict passed in a former reign to punish Roman Catholics for political rebellion. This way of putting the case seems only to make the character of the policy more clear and less justifiable. The Catholics of King George's time were to be mulcted indiscriminately because the Catholics of Queen Elizabeth's time had been declared liable to such a penalty. The Master of the Rolls, to his great credit, strongly opposed the resolution. Walpole supported it with all the weight of his argument and his influence. The plot was evidently a Popish plot, he contended, and although he was not prepared to accuse any English Catholic in particular of taking part in it, yet there could be no doubt that Papists in general were well-wishers to it, and that some of them had contributed large sums towards it. Why, then, should they not be made to reimburse some part of the expense to which they and the friends of the Pretender had put the nation? The resolution, after it had been reported from committee, was only carried in the whole House by 188 votes against 172. The resolution was embodied in a Bill, and the Bill, when it went up to the House of Lords, was opposed there by several of the peers, and especially by Lord Cowper, the 'silver-tongued Cowper,' who

Digitized by Google

had been so distinguished a Lord Chancellor under Anne, and under George himself. Lord Cowper's was an eloquent and a powerful speech. It tore to pieces the wretched web of flimsy sophistry by which the supporters of the Bill endeavoured to make out that it was not a measure of religious persecution. Indeed, there were some of these who insisted that, so far from being a measure of persecution, it was a measure of relief. Our readers will, no doubt, be curious to know how this bold position was sustained. In this wise: the penalties prescribed for the Catholics in Elizabeth's reign were much greater in amount than those which the Bill proposed to inflict on the Catholics of King George's time; therefore the Bill was an indulgence and not a persecution—a mitigation of penalty, not a punishment. Let us reduce the argument to plain figures. A Catholic in the reign of Elizabeth is declared liable to a penalty of twenty pounds; but out of considerations of humanity or justice the penalty is not enforced. The descendant and heir of that same Catholic in the reign of George the First is fined fifteen pounds, and the fine is exacted. He complains, and he is told, 'You have no right to complain; you ought to be grateful; the original fine ordained was twenty pounds; you have been let off five pounds—you have been favoured by an act of indulgence, not victimised by an act of persecution.' Lord Cowper had not much trouble in disposing of arguments of this kind, but his speech took a wider range, and is indeed a masterly exposure of the

Digitized by Google

whole principle on which the measure was founded. On May 22, 1723, sixty-nine peers voted for the third reading of the Bill, and fifty-five opposed it. Lord Cowper, with twenty other peers entered a protest against the decision of the House, according to a practice then common in the House of Lords, and which has lately fallen into complete disuse. The recorded protests of dissentient peers form, we may observe, very important historical documents, and deserve, some of them, a careful study. Lord Cowper's protest was the last public act of his useful and honourable career. He died on the 10th of October in the same year, 1723. Some of his enemies explained his action on the anti-Papist Bill by the assertion that he was a Jacobite at heart. Even if he had been, the fact would hardly have made his conduct less creditable and spirited. Many a man who was a Jacobite at heart would have supported a measure for the punishment of Roman Catholics if only to save himself from the suspicion of sympathy with the lost cause.

This, however, was but an episode in the story of the Jacobite plot and the measures taken to punish those who were engaged in it. Committees of secrecy were appointed by Parliament to inquire into the evidence and examine witnesses.

Meantime both Houses of Parliament kept voting address after address to the Crown at each new stage of the proceedings, and as each fresh evidence of the conspiracy was laid before them. The King must have grown rather weary of finding new words of

Digitized by Google

gratitude, and the Houses of Parliament, one would think, must have grown tired of inventing new phrases of loyalty and fresh expressions of horror at the wickedness of the Jacobites. The horror was not quite genuine on the part of some who thus proclaimed it. Many of those who voted the addresses would gladly have welcomed a restoration of the Stuarts. Not the most devoted adherent of King George could really have felt any surprise at the persistent efforts of the Jacobite partisans. Eight years before this it was a mere toss-up whether Stuart or Hanover should succeed, and even still it was not quite certain whether, if the machinery of the modern *plébiscite* could have been put into operation in England, the majority would not have been found in sympathy with Atterbury. It is almost certain that if the *plébiscite* could have been taken in Ireland and Scotland also, a majority of voices would have voted James Stuart to the throne.

It was resolved to proceed against Atterbury by a Bill of Pains and Penalties to be brought into Parliament. The evidence against him was certainly not such as any criminal court would have held to justify a conviction. A young barrister, named Christopher Layer, was arrested and examined; so were a non-juring minister named Kelly, an Irish Catholic priest called Neynoe, and a man named Plunkett, also from Ireland. The charge against Atterbury was founded on the statements obtained or extorted from these men. It should be said that Layer gave evidence which actually seemed to impugn

Digitized by Google

Lord Cowper himself as a member of a club of disaffected persons; and when Lord Cowper indignantly repudiated the charge and demanded an inquiry, the Government declared inquiry absolutely unnecessary, as everybody was well assured of his innocence. The Government, however, declined to follow Lord Cowper in his not unreasonable assumption that the whole story was unworthy of explicit credence when it included such a false statement. The case against Atterbury rested on the declaration of some of the arrested men that the bishop had carried on a correspondence with James Stuart, Lord Mar, and General Dillon (an Irish Catholic soldier, who after the capitulation of Limerick had entered the French service), through the instrumentality of Kelly, who acted as his secretary and amanuensis for that purpose. It was a case of circumstantial evidence altogether. The impartial reader of history now will feel well satisfied on two points—first, that Atterbury was engaged in the plot; and second, that the evidence brought against him was not nearly strong enough to sustain a conviction. It was the case of Bolingbroke and Harley over again. We know now that the men had done the things charged against them, but the evidence then relied upon was utterly inadequate to sustain the charge.

A 'Dialogue in Verse between a Whig and a Tory' was written by Swift in the year 1723, 'concerning the horrid plot discovered by Harlequin, the Bishop of Rochester's French Dog.' The Whig tells the Tory that the dog—

Digitized by Google

His name is Harlequin, I wot,
And that's a name in every plot—

was generously

Resolved to save the British nation,
Though French by birth and education;
His correspondence plainly dated
Was all deciphered and translated;
His answers were exceeding pretty,
Before the secret wise committee;
Confessed as plain as he could bark,
Then with his fore-foot set his mark.

There was more than mere fooling in the lines. The dog Harlequin was made to bear important evidence against the Bishop of Rochester. Atterbury had never resigned himself to the Hanoverian dynasty. He did not believe it would last, and he openly declaimed against it. He did more than this, however: he engaged in conspiracies for the restoration of James Stuart. Horace Walpole says of him that he was simply a Jacobite priest. He was a Jacobite priest who would gladly, if he could, have been a Jacobite soldier, and had given ample evidence of courage equal to such a part. He had been engaged in a long correspondence with Jacobite conspirators at home and abroad. The correspondence was carried on in cipher, and, of course, under feigned names. Atterbury appears to have been described now as Mr. Illington, and now as Mr. Jones. Atterbury refused to make any defence before the House of Commons; but he appeared before the House of Lords on May 6, 1723, and defended himself, and made strong and eloquent protestation of his innocence. One of the witnesses whom he called in his defence was his friend

Digitized by Google

Pope, who could only give evidence as to the manner in which the bishop had passed his time when staying in the poet's house. Christopher Layer, Atterbury's associate in the general charge of conspiracy, was a young barrister of good family, a remarkably handsome, graceful, and accomplished man. One charge against him was that he had formed a plan to murder the King and carry off the Prince of Wales ; but the statements made against Layer must be taken with liberal allowance for the extravagance of loyal passion, panic, and exaggeration. Layer had escaped and was recaptured, was tried, found guilty, and sentenced to death. He was hanged at Tyburn on March 15, 1723 ; he met his death with calm courage. His body was quartered and his head was set on Temple Bar, from which it was presently blown down by the wind. Someone picked up the head and sold it to a surgeon. Neynoe, another of the accused men, contrived to escape from custody, got to the river, endeavoured to swim across it, and was drowned in the attempt.

The charges made against Atterbury had therefore sometimes to rest upon inferences drawn from confessions, or portions of confessions, averred to have dropped or been drawn from men whose lips were now closed by death. Those who defended Atterbury dwelt strongly on this fact, as was but natural. It is curious to notice how often in the debates of the Lords on the Bill of Pains and Penalties one noble peer accuses another of secret sympathy with Jacobite schemes. As regards Atterbury, the whole question

Digitized by Google

was whether he was really the person described in the correspondence now as Jones and now as Illington. There might have been no evidence which even a 'secret, wise' committee of that day would have cared to accept but for the fact that the bishop's wife had received, or was to have received, from France a present of a dog called Harlequin, and that there was mention in the correspondence about poor Mr. Illington being in grief for the loss of his dog Harlequin. This allusion put the committee of secrecy on the track. The bishop's wife had lately died, and it would seem from the correspondence that Illington's wife had died about the same time. Clearly, if it were once assumed that Illington and Atterbury were one and the same person, there was ample ground for suspicion, and even for a general belief that the story told was true in the main. The evidence was enough for Parliament at that time, and the Bill passed the House of Lords on May 16 by a majority of 83 votes to 43. Atterbury was deprived of all his offices and dignities, declared to be for ever incapable of holding any place or exercising any authority within the King's dominions, and condemned to perpetual banishment. He went to France in the first instance with his daughter and her husband. It so happened that Bolingbroke had just at that time obtained a sort of conditional pardon from the King; obtained it mainly by bribing the Duchess of Kendal. The two Jacobites crossed each other on the way, one going into exile, the other returning from it. 'I am exchanged,' was Atterbury's remark. 'The nation,'

Digitized by Google

said Pope afterwards, 'is afraid of being overrun with genius, and cannot regain one great man but at the expense of another.' So far as this history is concerned we part with Atterbury here. He lived abroad until 1731, and after his death his remains were brought back and privately laid in Westminster Abbey.

We have directed attention to the freedom and frequency of the accusations of Jacobitism made by one peer against another during the debates on Atterbury's case. The fact is worthy of note if only to show how uncertain, even still, was the foundation of the throne of Brunswick, and how wide-spread the sympathy with the lost cause was supposed to be. When Bolingbroke was allowed to return to England, some of Swift's friends instantly fancied that he must have purchased his permission by telling some tale against the dean himself, among others, and long after this time we find Swift defending himself against the rumoured accusation of a share in Jacobite conspiracy. The condition of the public mind is well pictured in a description of two imaginary politicians in one of the successors to the *Tatler*. 'Tom Tempest' is described as a steady friend to the House of Stuart. He can recount the prodigies that have appeared in the sky, and the calamities that have afflicted the nation every year from the Revolution, and is of opinion that if the exiled family had continued to reign there would neither have been worms in our ships nor caterpillars in our trees. He firmly believes that King William burnt Whitehall that he might steal the furniture, and that

Digitized by Google

Tillotson died an atheist. Of Queen Anne he speaks with more tenderness; owns that she meant well, and can tell by whom she was poisoned. Tom has always some new promise that we shall see in another month the rightful monarch on the throne. 'Jack Sneaker,' on the other hand, is a devoted adherent to the present establishment. He has known those who saw the bed in which the Pretender was conveyed in a warming-pan. He often rejoices that this nation was not enslaved by the Irish. He believes that King William never lost a battle, and that if he had lived one year longer he would have conquered France. Yet amid all this satisfaction he is hourly disturbed by dread of Popery; wonders that stricter laws are not made against the Papists, and is sometimes afraid that they are busy with French gold among our bishops and judges.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XIV.

WALPOLE IN POWER AS WELL AS OFFICE.

WALPOLE was now prime minister. The King wished to reward him for his services by conferring a peerage on him, but this honour Walpole steadily declined. One of his biographers says that his refusal 'at first appears extraordinary.' It ought not to appear extraordinary at first or at last. Walpole knew that the sceptre of government in England had passed to the House of Commons. He would have been unwise and inconsistent indeed if at his time of life he had consented to renounce the influence and the power which a seat in that House gave him for the comparative insignificance and obscurity of a seat in the House of Lords. He accepted a title for his eldest son, who was made Baron Walpole; but for himself he preferred to keep to the field in which he had won his name, and where he could make his influence and power felt all over the land.

We may anticipate the course of events, and say at once that hardly ever before in the history of English political life, and hardly ever since Walpole's time, has a minister had so long a run of power. His long administration, as Mr. Green well says, is

Digitized by Google

almost without a history. It is almost without a history, that is to say, in the ordinary sense of the word. For the most part, the steady movement of England's progress remains during long years and years undisturbed by any event of great dramatic interest at home or abroad. But the period of Walpole's long and successful administration was none the less a period of the highest importance in English history. It was a time of almost uninterrupted national development in the right direction, and almost unbroken national prosperity. The foreign policy of Walpole was, on the whole, no less sound and just than his policy at home. His first ambition was to keep England out of wars with foreign Powers. Yet his was not the ambition which some later statesmen, especially, for example, Mr. Bright, have owned—the ambition to keep England free of any foreign policy whatever. Such an ambition was not Walpole's, and such an ambition at Walpoel's time it would have been all but impossible to realise. Walpole knew well that there was no way of keeping England out of foreign wars at that season of political growth but by securing for her a commanding influence in Continental affairs. Such influence he set himself to establish, and he succeeded in establishing it by friendly and satisfactory alliances with France and other Powers. Turning back for a moment into the political affairs of a year or two previous, we may remark that one of the consequences of the Mississippi scheme, and the reign of Mr. Law in France, had been the recall of Lord Stair from the French Court,

Digitized by Google

to which he was accredited as English ambassador. Lord Stair quarrelled with Law when Law was all powerful; and, in order to propitiate the financial dictator, it was found convenient to recall Stair from Paris. England had been well served by him as her ambassador at the French Court. We have already said something of Lord Stair, his ability, courage, and dexterity, his winning ways, and his fearless spirit. John Dalrymple, second Earl of Stair, was one of the remarkable men of his time. He was a scholar and an orator, a soldier and a diplomatist. He had fought with conspicuous bravery and skill under William the Third, and under Marlborough. He appears to have combined a daring that looked like recklessness with a cool calculation which made it prudence. On Marlborough's fall, Lord Stair fell with him. He was deprived of all his public offices, and was plunged into a condition of something like poverty. When George the First came to the throne, Stair was taken into favour again, and as a special tribute to his diplomatic capacity, was sent to represent England at the Court of France. There he displayed consummate sagacity, foresight, and firmness. He contrived to make himself acquainted beforehand with everything the Jacobites were doing. This, as may be seen by Bolingbroke's complaints, was easy enough at one time; but the adherents of James Stuart began after a while to learn prudence, and some of their enterprises were conducted up to a certain point with much craft and caution. Lord Stair, however, always contrived to

Digitized by Google

get the information he wanted. Some of the arts by which he accomplished his purposes were not, perhaps, such as a great diplomatist of our time would have cared to practise. He bribed with liberal hand; he kept persons of all kinds in his pay; he bribed French officials, and even French ministers; he got to know all that was done in the most secret councils of the State. He used to go about the capital in disguise in order to find out what people were saying in the wine-shops and coffee-houses. Often, after he had entertained a brilliant company of guests at a state dinner, he would make some excuse to his friends for quitting them abruptly; say that he had received despatches which required his instant attention, leave the company to be entertained by his wife, withdraw to his study, there quietly change his clothes, and then wander out on one of his nightly visitations of taverns and coffee-houses. He paid court to great ladies, flattered them, allowed them to win money at cards from him, and even made love to them, for the sake of getting some political secrets out of them. He had a noble and stately presence, a handsome face, and charming manners. He is said to have been the most polite and well-bred man of his time. It is of him the story is told about the test of good breeding which the King of France applied and acknowledged. Louis the Fourteenth had heard it said that Stair was the best-bred man of his day. The King invited Stair to drive out with him. As they were about to enter the carriage the king signed to the English ambassador to go

Digitized by Google

first. Stair bowed and entered the carriage. 'The world is right about Lord Stair,' said the King; 'I never before saw a man who would not have troubled me with excuses and ceremony.'

The French Government naturally feared that the recall of Lord Stair might be marked by a change in the friendly disposition of England. This fear became greater on the death of Stanhope. The English Government, however, took steps to reassure the Regent of France. Townshend himself wrote at once to Cardinal Dubois, promising to maintain, as before, a cordial friendship with the French Government. Walpole was entirely imbued with the instincts of such a policy. The chief disturbing influence in Continental politics arose from the anxiety of Spain to recover Gibraltar and Minorca, and, in fact, to get back again all that had been taken from her by the Treaty of Utrecht. The territorial and other arrangements which concluded with the Treaty of Utrecht made themselves the central point of all the foreign policy of that time: these States were concerned to maintain the treaty; those were eager to break through its bonds. It holds in the politics of that day the place which was held by the Treaty of Vienna at a later period. There is always much of the hypocritical about the manner in which treaties of that highly artificial nature are made. No State really intends to hold by them any longer than she finds that they serve her own interests. If they are imposed upon a State and are injurious to her, that State never means to submit to them any longer than she

Digitized by Google

is actually under compulsion. New means and impulses to break away from such bonds are given to those inclined that way in the fact that the arrangements are usually made without the slightest concern for the populations of the countries concerned, but only for dynastic or other political considerations. The pride of the Spanish people was so much hurt by some of the conditions of the Treaty of Utrecht that a Spanish sovereign or minister would always be popular who could point to his people a way to escape from its bonds or to rend them in pieces. Spain therefore was always looking out for new alliances. She saw at one time a fresh chance for trying her policy, and she held out every inducement in her power to the Emperor Charles the Sixth and to Russia to enter into a combination against France and England. The Emperor was without a son, and, in consequence, had issued his famous Pragmatic Sanction, providing that his hereditary dominions in Austria, Hungary, and Bohemia should descend to his daughter Maria Theresa. The great Powers of Europe had not as yet seen fit to guarantee, or even recognise, this succession. Spain held out the temptation to the Emperor of her own guarantee to the Pragmatic Sanction and of several important concessions in the matter of trade and commerce to Austria, on consideration that the Emperor should assist Spain to recover her lost territory. Catherine, the wife of Peter the Great, was now governing Russia, and was entering into secret negotiations with Spain and with the Emperor. Townshend and Walpole understood

Digitized by Google

all that was going on, and succeeded in making a defensive treaty between England, France, and Prussia. Prussia, to be sure, did not long hold to the treaty, and her withdrawal gave a new stimulus to the machinations of the Emperor and of Philip of Spain, and in 1727 Philip actually ventured to lay siege to Gibraltar. England, France, and Holland, however, held firmly together; the Russian Empress suddenly died, the Emperor Charles was not inclined to risk much, and Spain finally had to come to terms with England and her allies.

These troubles might have proved serious but for the determined policy of Townshend and of Walpole. We have not thought it necessary to weary our readers with the details of this little running fire of dispute which was kept up for some years between England and Spain. We saw in an earlier chapter how the quarrel began and what the elements were which fed it and kept it burning. This latter passage is really only a continuation of the former; both, except for the sake of mere continuity of historic narrative, might have been told as one story, and, indeed, would perhaps not have required many sentences for the telling. Walpole applied himself at home to the work of what has since been called Peace, Retrenchment, and Reform. He was the first great English finance minister; perhaps we may say he was the first English minister who ever sincerely regarded the development of national prosperity, the just and equal distribution of taxation, and the lightening of the load of financial burdens, as the most

Digitized by Google

important business of a statesman. The whole political and social conditions of the country were changing under his wise and beneficent system of administration. Population was steadily increasing; some of the great rising towns had doubled their numbers since Walpole's career began. Agriculture was better in its systems, and was brightening the face of the country everywhere; the farmer had almost ceased for the time to grumble; the labourer was well fed, and not too heavily worked. We do not mean to say that Walpole's administration was the one cause of all this improvement in town and country; but most assuredly the peace, and the security of peace, which Walpole's administration conferred was of direct and material influence in the growing prosperity of the nation. His financial systems lightened the burdens of taxation, distributed the load more equally everywhere, and enabled the State to get the best revenue possible at the lowest cost and with the least effort. It might almost be said that Walpole anticipated free trade. The royal speech from the Throne at the opening of Parliament on October 19, 1721, declared it to be 'very obvious that nothing would more conduce to the obtaining so public a good'—the extension of our commerce—'than to make the exportation of our own manufactures, and the importation of the commodities used in the manufacturing of them, as practicable and as easy as may be; by this means the balance of trade may be preserved in our favour, our navigation increased, and greater numbers of our poor employed.' 'I must therefore,' the speech

Digitized by Google

went on, 'recommend it to you, gentlemen of the House of Commons, to consider how far the duties upon these branches may be taken off and replaced, without any violation of public faith or laying any new burden upon my people. And I promise myself that, by a due consideration of this matter, the produce of those duties, compared with the infinite advantages that will accrue to the kingdom by their being taken off, will be found so inconsiderable as to leave little room for any difficulties or objections.' In furtherance of the policy indicated in these passages of the royal speech, more than one hundred articles of British manufacture were allowed to be exported free of duty, while some forty articles of raw material were allowed to be imported in the same manner. Walpole was anxious to make a full use of this system of indirect taxation. He desired to levy and collect taxes in such a manner as to avoid the losses imposed upon the revenue by smuggling and by various forms of fraud. His principle was that the necessaries of life and the raw materials from which our manufactures were to be made ought to remain, as far as possible, free of taxation. The whole history of our financial systems since Walpole's time has been a history of the gradual development of his economic principles. There has been, of course, reaction now and then, and sometimes the counsels of statesmen appear for awhile to have been under the absolute domination of the policy which he strove to supplant. But the reaction has only been for seasons, while the progress of Walpole's policy has been steady. We have

Digitized by Google

now, in 1884, nearly accomplished the financial task Walpole would, if he could, have accomplished a century and a half earlier.

No one can deny that Walpole was an unscrupulous minister. He would gladly have carried out the best policy by the best means; but where this was not practicable or convenient he was perfectly willing to carry out a noble policy by the vilest methods. He was not himself avaricious; he was not open to the temptations of money. He had a fortune large enough for him, and he spent it freely; but he was willing to bribe and corrupt all those of whom he could make any use. Under his rule corruption became a settled Parliamentary system. He had done more than any other man to make the House of Commons the most powerful factor in the government of England. He had therefore made a seat in the House of Commons an object of the highest ambition. To sit in that House made the obscurest country gentleman a power in the State. Naturally, therefore, a seat in the House of Commons was struggled for, scrambled for, fought for—obtained at any cost of money, influence, time, and temper. Naturally also a seat thus obtained was a possession through which recompense of some kind was expected. Those who buy their seats naturally expect to sell their votes; at least that was so in the days of Walpole. In times nearer to our own England has seen a condition of things in which public opinion and the development of a sort of national conscience absolutely prevented members from taking bribes, although it allowed them the most liberal use

Digitized by Google

of bribery and corruption in the obtaining of their seats. The member of Parliament who, twenty or thirty years ago, would have bought his seat by means of the most unblushing and shameless corruption, would no more have thought of selling his vote to a minister for a money payment than he would have thought of selling his wife at Smithfield. But in Walpole's time the man who bought his seat was ready to sell his vote. Walpole, the minister, was willing to buy the vote of any man who would sell it. He was lavish in the gift of lucrative offices, of rich sinecures, of pensions, and even of bribes in a lump sum, money down. He would bribe a member's wife, if that were more convenient than openly to bribe the member himself. He had no particular choice as to whether the bribe should be direct or indirect, open or secret; he wanted to get the vote, he was willing to pay the price, and he cared not who knew of the arrangement. We have already mentioned that the saying ascribed to him about every man having his price was never uttered by him. What he said probably was, that 'each of these men,' alluding to a certain group or party, had his price. He is reported to have said that he never knew any woman who would not take money, except one noble lady, whom he named, and she, he said, took diamonds. He acted consistently and was not ashamed. He was incorrupt himself; he was even in that sense incorruptible; but in order to gain his own public purposes, wise and just as they were, he was willing to corrupt a whole

Digitized by Google

House of Commons, and would not have shrunk from corrupting a nation.

It ought to be pointed out that the very pacific nature of Walpole's policy and the security and steadiness of his administration made it sometimes all the more necessary for him to have recourse to questionable methods. Great controversies of imperial or national interest—controversies which stir the hearts of men, which appeal to their principles and awaken their passions—did not often arise during his long tenure of power. Agitations of this kind, whatever trouble and disturbance they may bring with them, have a purifying effect upon the political atmosphere. Only a very ignoble creature is to be bribed out of his opinions when some interest is at stake on which his heart, his training, and his associations have already taught him to take sides. Walpole kept the nation out of such controversies for the most part, and one result was that small political combinations of various kinds were free to form themselves around him, beneath him, and against him. The House of Commons sometimes threatened to dissolve itself into a number of little separate sections or factions, none of them representing any real principle or having more than a temporary attraction of cohesion. Walpole was again and again placed in the position of having to encounter some little faction of this kind by open exercise of power or by the process of corruption, and he usually found the latter course more convenient and ready. Nor could such a man at any period of English history have remained long

Digitized by Google

without more or less formidable rivals. Walpole himself must have known well enough that the death of men like Sunderland, or the death of any number of men, could not, so long as England was herself, secure him for long an undisturbed political field with no head raised against him. A country like this is never so barren of political intellect and courage as to admit of a long dictatorship in political life.

Walpole had already one rising rival in the person of Lord Carteret, afterwards Earl of Granville. John Carteret was born April 22, 1690, and was only five years old when the death of his father, the first Lord Carteret, made him a member of the House of Lords. He distinguished himself greatly at Oxford, and entered very early into public life. He was from the beginning a favourite of George the First, and by the influence of Stanhope was entrusted with various diplomatic missions of more or less importance. In 1721 he was actually appointed ambassador to the Court of France. The death of Craggs, the Secretary of State, however, made a vacancy in the administration, and the place was at once assigned to Carteret. Carteret was one of those men whose genius we have to believe in rather on the faith of contemporary judgment than by reason of any track of its own it has left behind. The unanimous opinion of all who knew him, and more especially of those who were commonly brought into contact with him, was that Carteret possessed the rarest combination of statesmanlike and literary gifts. Probably no English public man ever exhibited in a higher degree the qualities that bring

Digitized by Google

success in politics and the qualities that bring success in literature. It seems strange to have to say this when one remembers a man like Bolingbroke and a man like Burke; but it is certain that neither Bolingbroke nor Burke could boast of such scholarship and accomplishments as those of Carteret. He was a profound classical scholar; he was a master of French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, German, and Swedish. His scientific knowledge was extraordinary for that time; he was a close student of the history of past and passing time; he was deeply interested in constitutional law, and had a passion for Church history. He was a great parliamentary debater—some say he was even a great orator. He was prompt and bold in his decisions; he was not afraid of any enterprise; he was not depressed or abashed by failure; he could take fortune's buffets and rewards with equal thanks. Large brains and small affections are, according to Mr. Disraeli, the essential qualities for success in public life. Carteret had large brains and small affections; he had no friendships and no enmities. Like Fox, he was a bad hater, but, unlike Fox, he had not a heart to love. He was fond of books, and of wine, and of women; he was a great drinker of wine, even for those days of deep drink. Beneath all the apparent energy and daring of his character there lay a voluptuous love of ease and languor. He was not a lazy man, but his inclination was always to be an indolent man. He leaped up to sudden political action when the call came, like Sardanapalus leaping up to the inevitable fight; but, like Sardanapalus, he

Digitized by Google

would have been always glad to lie down again and loll in ease the moment the necessity for action had passed away. No doubt his daily allowance of Burgundy—a very liberal and generous allowance—had a good deal to do with his tendency to indolence. Whatever the reason, it is certain that, with all his magnificent gifts and his splendid chances, he did nothing great, and has left no abiding mark in history. Everyone who came near him seems to have regarded his as a master spirit. Chesterfield said of him, 'When he dies the ablest head in England dies too, take it for all in all.' Horace Walpole declares him to be superior in one set of qualities to his father, Sir Robert Walpole, and in others to the great Lord Chatham. 'Why did they send you here?' Swift said to Carteret with rough good humour when Carteret came over to Dublin to be Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland. 'You are not fit for this place; let them send us back our boobies.' Carteret's fame has always seemed to us like the fame of Sheridan's Begum speech. Such poor records as we have of that speech seem hardly to hint at any extraordinary eloquence; yet the absolutely unanimous opinion of all that heard it—of all the orators and statesmen and critics of the time—was that so great a speech had never before been spoken in Parliament. These men can hardly have been all wrong, one would think; and yet, on the other hand, it is not easy to believe that those who made such record of the speech as we have can have purposely left out all the eloquence, the wit, and the argument. In like manner, readers of this

Digitized by Google

day may perplex themselves about the fame of Carteret. All the men who knew him can hardly have been mistaken when they concurred in giving him credit for surpassing genius; and yet we find no evidence of that genius either in the literature or the political history of England.

Carteret had one great advantage over Walpole and over all his contemporaries in political life. He was able to speak German fluently; he was able to talk for hours with the King in the King's own guttural tongue. The King clung to Carteret's companionship because of his German. While Walpole was trying to instil his policy and counsels into George's mind through the non-conducting medium of very bad Latin, while other ministers were endeavouring to approach the royal intelligence by means of French which they spoke badly and he understood imperfectly, Carteret could rattle away in idiomatic German, and could amuse the royal humour even with voluble German slang. Carteret had come into public life under the influence of Lord Sunderland and Lord Stanhope, and he regarded himself as the successor to their policy. He never considered himself as quite in understanding and harmony with Townshend and Walpole. His principal idea was that the time had passed when it was proper or expedient to exclude the Tories or the High Churchmen from the political service of the Crown. He desired to enlarge the basis of administration by admitting some of the more plastic and progressive of the Tories to a share in it. There was, however, something more than a conflict

Digitized by Google

of political views between Carteret and Walpole. Walpole's ambition was to be the constitutional dictator of England. We do not say that this was a mere personal ambition; on the contrary, we believe Walpole acted on the honest conviction that he knew better than any other man how England ought to be governed. He was sure, and reasonably sure, that no other statesman could play the game so well; he therefore claimed the right to play it. Carteret, on the other hand, was far too strong a man to be quietly pushed into the background. He was determined that if he remained in the service of the State he would be a statesman, and not a clerk.

Therefore, while Carteret and Walpole were colleagues, there was always a struggle going on between them, and, like all the political struggles of the time, it had a great deal of underhand influence, and the worst kind of petticoat influence, engaged in it. One of the King's mistresses—the most influential of them—gave all her support to Walpole; another royal paramour lent her aid to Carteret's side. Carteret played into the King's hands as regarded the Hanoverian policy, and was for taking strong measures against Russia. Townshend and Walpole would hear of no schemes which threatened to entangle England in war for the sake of Hanoverian interests. George liked Carteret and was captivated by his policy, as well as by his personal qualities, but he could not help seeing that Townshend's advice was the sounder, and that no man could manage the finances like Walpole. George went to Hanover in the summer of

Digitized by Google

1723, and both the Secretaries of State went with him. This was something unusual, and even unprecedented; but the King would not do without the companionship of Carteret, and knew that he could not do without the advice of Townshend. So both Townshend and Carteret went with his Majesty to Herrenhausen, and Walpole had the whole business of administration in his own hands at home.

A very paltry and pitiful intrigue at length settled the question between Townshend and Carteret. A marriage had been arranged between a niece, or so-called niece, of one of George's mistresses and the son of La Vrillière, the French Secretary of State. Madame La Vrillière insisted, as a condition of the marriage, that her husband should be made a duke, and it was assumed that this could be brought about by the influence of the English Government. King George was anxious that the marriage should take place, and Carteret, of course, was willing to assist him. The English ambassador at the Court of France was a man named Sir Luke Schaub, by birth a Swiss, who had been Stanhope's secretary, and by Stanhope's influence was pushed up in the diplomatic service. Sir Luke Schaub was in close understanding with Carteret, and was strongly hostile to Townshend and Walpole. Of this fact Townshend was well aware, and he took care that Schaub should be closely watched in Paris. Schaub was instructed by Carteret to do all he could in order to obtain the dukedom for Madame La Vrillière's husband. Cardinal Dubois died, and his place in the councils of the Duke of Orleans was

Digitized by Google

taken by Count Nocé, who was believed to be hostile to England. This fact gave Townshend an excuse for suggesting to the King that someone should be sent to Paris to watch over the action of the French Government and the conduct of the English ambassador, 'in such a manner,' so Townshend wrote from Hanover to Walpole, 'as may neither hurt Sir Luke Schaub's credit with the Duke of Orleans, nor create a jealousy in Sir Luke of the King's intending to withdraw his confidence from him.' This was, of course, exactly what Townshend wanted to do—to induce the King to withdraw his confidence from poor Sir Luke. The King agreed that it was necessary someone 'in whose fidelity and dexterity he can depend' should set out from England to Hanover, 'and take Paris on his way hither, under pretence of a curiosity to see that place, and without owning to anyone living the business he is employed in.' The person selected for this somewhat delicate mission was Horace Walpole, Robert Walpole's only surviving brother.

Horace Walpole acquitted himself very cleverly of the task assigned to him. He was a man of uncouth manners, but of some shrewd ability and of varied experience. He had been a soldier with Stanhope before acting as Under-Secretary of State to Townshend; he had managed to distinguish himself in Parliament and in diplomacy. He soon contrived to obtain the ear of the Duke of Orleans, and he found that Sir Luke Schaub had been deceiving himself and his sovereign about the prospect of La Vrillière's

Digitized by Google

dukedom. Philip of Orleans told Horace Walpole frankly that there never was the slightest idea of giving such a dukedom, and added that the dignity of France would be compromised if such a concession were made in order to enable the King of England 'to marry his bastard daughter'—so the Duke put it—into the French *noblesse*. Sir Luke Schaub's haste and indiscreet zeal had, in fact, brought his sovereign into discredit, and even compromised the good understanding between England and France.

Philip of Orleans died almost immediately. His death was sudden; but he had long run a course which set all laws of health at defiance. He stuck to his pleasures to the very last—died, one might say, in harness. His successor in the administration of France, under the young King Louis the Fifteenth, who had just been declared of age, was the Duke de Bourbon, Philip's equal perhaps in profligacy, but not by any means his equal in capacity. Horace Walpole won over the new administrator. The Duke de Bourbon told him that Sir Luke Schaub was obnoxious to everyone in the French Court, and that he was not fit, by birth, breeding, or capacity, to represent England there.

We need not follow the intrigue through all its turns and twists. Walpole and Townshend succeeded. Schaub was recalled; Horace Walpole was appointed ambassador in his place. The recall of Schaub involved the fall of Carteret. Carteret, however, was not a man to be rudely thrust out of office, and a soft fall was therefore prepared for him; he was made

Digitized by Google

Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland. He knew that he was defeated. Then, as at a later day and at an earlier, the Viceroyalty of Ireland was the gilding which enabled a man to gulp down the bitter pill of political failure. When Lord John Russell obtained the dismissal of Lord Palmerston from his Cabinet in 1851 he endeavoured, somewhat awkwardly, to soften the blow by offering to his dispossessed rival the position of Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland. Lord Palmerston understood the meaning of the offer, and treated it—as was but natural—with open contempt. Carteret acted otherwise. Probably he felt within himself that he was not destined to a great political career. In any case, he accepted the offer with perfect good humour, declaring that, on the whole, he thought he should be much more pleasantly situated as a dictator in Dublin than as the servant of a dictator in London.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XV.

THE DRAPIER'S LETTERS.

Lord Carteret arrived at the seat of his Vice-royalty in the midst of a political storm which threatened at one time to blow down a good many shaky institutions. He found the whole country, and especially the capital, convulsed by an agitation the like of which was not seen again until the days of Grattan and the Volunteers. The hero of the agitation was Swift; the spell-words which gave it life and direction were found in 'The Drapier's Letters.'

The copper coinage of Ireland had been for a long time deficient. Employers of labour had in many cases been obliged to pay their workmen in tokens; sometimes even with pieces of card, stamped and signed, and representing each a small amount. During Sunderland's time of power, the Government set themselves to work to supply the lack of copper, and invited tenders from the owners of mines for the supply. A Mr. William Wood, a man who owned iron and copper mines, and iron and copper works, sent in a tender which was accepted. A patent was given to Wood permitting him to coin halfpence and farthings to the value of one hundred and eight

Digitized by Google

thousand pounds. Walpole had not approved of the scheme himself, but for various reasons he did not venture to upset it. He had the patent prepared, and consulted Sir Isaac Newton, then Master of the Mint, with regard to the objects which the Government had in view, and the weight and fineness of the coin which Wood was to supply. The halfpence and farthings were to be a little less in weight than the coin of the same kind current in England. Walpole considered this necessary because of the difference in exchange between the two countries. Sir Isaac Newton was of opinion that the Irish coin exceeded the English in fineness of metal. As to the King's prerogative for granting such patents, Walpole himself explained in a letter to Lord Townshend, then in Hanover with the King, that it was one never disputed and often exercised. The granting of this patent, and the mode of supplying the deficiency in copper coin, might seem little open to objection; but the Irish Privy Council at once declared against the whole transaction. Both Houses of the Irish Parliament passed addresses to the King, declaring that the introduction of Wood's coinage would be injurious to the revenue and positively destructive of trade. The Irish Lord Chancellor set himself sternly against the patent in private, and urged all his friends, comrades, and dependants, to act publicly against it. The addresses from the two Houses of Parliament were sent to Walpole, who transmitted them to Lord Townshend. Walpole accompanied the addresses with an explanation in which he vindicated the policy

Digitized by Google

represented by the granting of the patent, and insisted that no harm whatever could be done to the trade or revenue of Ireland by the introduction of the new copper coinage. Walpole advised that the King should return a soothing and a conciliatory reply to the addresses, and the King acted accordingly. It seemed at one time probable that a satisfactory compromise would be arranged between the Irish Parliament and King George's ministers. This hope, however, was soon dispelled.

One objection felt by the Irish people in general to the patent and the new coinage, was founded on the discovery of the fact that Wood had agreed to pay a large bribe to the Duchess of Kendal for her influence in obtaining the patent for him. The objection of the Irish Executive and the Irish Parliament, was mainly based on the fact that Dublin had not been consulted in the arrangement of the business. The ministers in London settled the whole affair, and then simply communicated the nature of the arrangement to Dublin. Wood himself was unpopular, so far as anything could be known of him, in Ireland. He was a stranger to Ireland, and he was represented to be a boastful, arrogant man, who went about saying he could do anything he liked with Walpole, and that he would cram his copper coins down the throats of the Irish people. All these objections, however, might have been got over, but for the sudden appearance of an unexpected and a powerful actor on the scene. One morning appeared in Dublin 'A letter to the shop-keepers, tradesmen, farmers, and

Digitized by Google

common people of Ireland, concerning the brass halfpence coined by one William Wood, hardwareman, with a design to have them pass in this kingdom; wherein is shown the power of his patent, the value of his halfpence, and how far every person may be obliged to take the same in payments; and how to behave himself in case such an attempt should be made by Wood or any other person.' The letter was signed 'M. B., Drapier.' This was the first of those famous Drapier's Letters which convulsed Ireland with a passion like that preceding a great popular insurrection. It may be questioned whether the pamphlets of a literary politician ever before or since worked with so powerful an influence on the mind of a nation as these marvellous letters.

The author of 'The Drapier's Letters,' we need hardly say, was Dean Swift. Swift had for some years withdrawn himself from the political world. He is described by one of his biographers as having 'amused himself for three or four years with poetry, conversation, and trifles.' Now and then, however, he published some letter which showed his interest in the condition of the people among whom he lived; his proposal, for example, 'for the universal use of Irish manufacture in clothes and furniture of houses, &c.,' was written in the year 1720. This letter—the printer of which was subjected to a Government prosecution—contains a passage which has been, perhaps, more often and more persistently misquoted than any other observation of any author we can now remember. It seems to have become an article of faith with many

Digitized by Google

writers and most readers that Swift said, 'Burn everything that comes from England, except its coals.' Without much hope of correcting that false impression so far as the bulk of the reading and quoting public is concerned, we may observe that Swift never said anything of the kind. This is what he did say: 'I heard the late Archbishop of Tuam mention a pleasant observation of somebody's that "Ireland would never be happy until a law were made for burning everything that came from England except their people and their coals." I must confess that, as to the former, I should not be sorry if they would stay at home, and, for the latter, I hope in a little time we shall have no occasion for them.' Swift was not an Irish patriot; he was not, indeed, an Irishman at all, except by the accident of birth, and now by the accident of residence. He did not love the country; he would not have lived there a week if he could. He had no affection for the people, and, at first, very little sympathy with them. He was always angry if anybody regarded him as an Irishman. His friends were all found amongst what may be described as the English and Protestant colony in Ireland. He felt towards the native Irish—the Irish Catholics—very much as the official of an English Government might feel towards some savage tribe whom he had been sent out to govern. But at the same time it is an entire mistake to represent Swift as insincere in the efforts which he made to ameliorate the condition of the Irish people, and to redress some of the gross wrongs which he saw inflicted on them. The administrator of whom

Digitized by Google

we have already spoken might have gone out to the savage country with nothing but contempt for its wild natives, but if he were at all a humane and a just man, it would be natural for him as time went on to feel keenly if any injustice were inflicted on the poor creatures whom he despised, and at last to stand up with indignation as their defender and their champion. So it was with Swift. Little as he liked the Irish people in the beginning, yet he had a temper and a spirit which made him intolerant of injustice and oppression. That fierce indignation described by himself, and of which such store was always laid up in his heart, was roused to its highest point of heat by the sight of the miseries of the Irish people and of the frequent acts of neglect and injustice by which their misery was deepened. He felt the most sincere resentment at the arbitrary manner in which the Government in London were dealing with Ireland in the matter of Wood's patent and Wood's copper coin. Swift, of course, knew well by what influence the patent had been obtained, and he knew that when obtained it had been simply thrust upon the Irish authorities, Parliament, and people without any previous sanction or knowledge on their part. Very likely he was also convinced, or had convinced himself, that the patent and the new coin would be injurious to the revenues and the trade of the country. Certainly, if he was not convinced of this, he gave to all his diatribes against Wood, Wood's patent, and Wood's halfpence the tones of profoundest conviction. He assumed the character of a draper for the moment

Digitized by Google

—why he chose to spell draper 'drapier' nobody knew—and he certainly succeeded in putting on all the semblance of an honest trader driven to homely and robust indignation by an impudent proposal to injure the business of himself and his neighbours. In England, he says, 'the halfpence and farthings pass for very little more than they are worth, and if you should beat them to pieces and sell them to the brazier, you would not lose much above a penny in a shilling.' But he goes on to say that Mr. Wood, whom he describes as 'a mean, ordinary man, a hardware dealer'—Wood was, as we have already seen, a large owner of iron and copper mines and works, but that was all one to Dean Swift—'made his halfpence of such base metal and so much smaller than the English ones, that the brazier would hardly give you above a penny of good money for a shilling of his; so that this sum of one hundred and eight thousand pounds in good gold and silver may be given for trash that will not be worth above eight or nine thousand pounds real value.' Nor is even this the worst, he contends, 'for Mr. Wood, when he pleases, may by stealth send over another hundred and eight thousand pounds and buy all our goods for eleven parts in twelve under the value.' 'For example,' says Swift, 'if a hatter sells a dozen of hats for five shillings apiece, which amounts to three pounds, and receives the payment in Wood's coin, he really receives only the value of five shillings.' Of course this is the wildest exaggeration—is, in fact, mere extravagance and absurdity, if regarded as a financial proposition.

Digitized by Google

But Swift understood, as hardly any other man understood, the art of employing exaggeration with such an effect as to make it do the business of unquestionable fact. He was able to make his literary coins pass for much more than Wood could do with his halfpence and farthings. The artistic skill which bade the creatures whom Gulliver saw in his travels seem real, life-like, and living made the fantastic extravagance of the 'Drapier's Letters' strike home with all the force of truth to the minds of an excited populace.

Many biographers and historians have expressed a blank and utter amazement at the effect which Swift's letters produced. They have chosen to regard it as a mere historical curiosity, a sort of political paradox and puzzle. They have described the Irish people at the time as under the spell of something like sorcery. Even in our own days, Mr. Gladstone, in a speech delivered to the House of Commons, treated the convulsion caused by Swift's letters and Wood's halfpence as an outbreak of national frenzy, called up by the witchery of style displayed in the 'Drapier's Letters.' To some of us it is, on the other hand, a matter of surprise to see how capable writers, and especially how a man of Mr. Gladstone's genius and political knowledge, could for a moment be thus deceived. One is almost inclined to think that Mr. Gladstone could not have been reading the 'Drapier's Letters' recently, when he thus spoke of the effect which they produced, and thus was willing to explain it. Any one who reads the letters with impartial

Digitized by Google

attention will see that from first to last the anger that burns in them, the sarcasm that withers and scorches, the passionate eloquence which glows in even their most carefully measured sentences, are directed against Wood and his halfpence only because the patent, the bribe by which it was purchased, and the manner in which it was forced on Ireland, represented the injustice of the whole system of Irish administration, and the wrongs of many generations. 'It would be very hard if all Ireland,' Swift declares with indignation, 'should be put into one scale, and this sorry fellow Wood into the other.' 'I have a pretty good shop of Irish stuffs and silks,' the Drapier declares, 'and instead of taking Mr. Wood's bad copper, I intend to truck with my neighbours, the butchers, and bakers, and brewers, and the rest, goods for goods; and the little gold and silver I have, I will keep by me like my heart's blood till better times, or until I am just ready to starve.' 'Wood's contract?' he asks. 'His contract with whom? Was it with the Parliament or people of Ireland?' The reader who believes that such a passage as that, and scores of similar passages, were inspired merely by disapproval of the introduction of one hundred and eight thousand pounds in copper coin, must have very little understanding of Swift's temper or Swift's purpose, or the condition of the times in which Swift lived. 'I will shoot Mr. Wood and his deputies through the head, like highway-men or house-breakers, if they dare to force one farthing of their coin on me in the payment of an hundred pounds. It is no loss

Digitized by Google

of honour to submit to the lion, but who in the figure of a man can think with patience of being devoured alive by a rat?' . . . 'If the famous Mr. Hampden rather chose to go to prison than pay a few shillings to King Charles I. without authority of Parliament, I will rather choose to be hanged than have all my substance taxed at seventeen shillings in the pound, at the arbitrary will and pleasure of the venerable Mr. Wood.' Mr. Gladstone, perhaps, did not observe this allusion to 'the famous Mr. Hampden.' If he had done so, he would have better understood the inspiration of the 'Drapier's Letters.' Mr. Hampden was not so ignorant a man as to believe that the mere collection of the ship-money—the mere withdrawal of so much money from the pockets of certain taxpayers—would really ruin the trade and imperil the national existence of England. What Mr. Hampden objected to, and would have resisted to the death, was the unconstitutional and despotic system which the levy of the ship-money represented. The American colonists did not rise in rebellion against the Government of George III. merely because they had eaten of the insane root, and fancied that a trifling tax upon tea would destroy the trade of Boston and New York. They rose in arms against the principle represented by the imposition of the tax. We can all understand why there should have been a national rebellion against ship-money, and a national rebellion against a trumpery duty on tea, but English writers, and English public men, seem quite unable to explain the national outcry against Wood's patent, except on

Digitized by Google

the theory that a clever writer, pouring forth captivating nonsense, bewitched the Irish Parliament and the Irish people, and sent them out of their senses for a season.

Swift followed up his first letter by others in rapid succession. Lord Carteret arrived in Ireland when the agitation was at its height. He issued a proclamation against the 'Drapier's Letters,' offered a reward of three hundred pounds for the discovery of the author, and had the printer arrested. The Grand Jury, however, unanimously threw out the bill sent up against Harding, the printer. Another Grand Jury passed a presentment against all persons who should by fraud or otherwise impose Wood's copper coins upon the public. This presentment is said to have been drawn up by Swift's own hand. Lord Carteret at last had the good sense to perceive, and the spirit to acknowledge, that there was no alternative between concession and rebellion. He strongly urged his convictions on the Government, and the Government had the wisdom to yield. The patent was withdrawn, a pension was given to Wood in consideration of the loss he had sustained, and Swift was the object of universal gratitude, enthusiasm, love, and devotion, on the part of the Irish nation. Many a patriotic Irishman would fain believe to this very day that Swift, too, was Irish, and an Irish patriot. Ireland certainly has not yet forgotten, probably never will forget, the successful stand made by Swift against what he believed to be an insult to the Irish nation, when he took up his pen to write the first of the Drapier's immortal Letters.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XVI.

THE OPPOSITION.

THE trouble had hardly been got rid of in Ireland by Carteret's judicious advice and the withdrawal of Wood's patent when a commotion that at one time threatened to be equally serious broke out in Scotland. English members of Parliament had been for many years complaining that Scotland was exempt from any taxation on malt. Up to that time, no Government had attempted to take any steps towards establishing equality in this respect between the two countries. Walpole now strove to deal with the question. It was proposed in the House of Commons that instead of a malt duty in Scotland a duty of sixpence should be levied on every barrel of ale. Walpole at first was not inclined to deal with the difficulty in this way, but as the feeling of the House was very strongly in favour of making some attempt, he consented to adopt the principle suggested, but required that the duty should be threepence instead of sixpence. The moment it became known in Scotland that any tax on malt or ale was to be imposed, rioting began in the principal cities; the spirit of the national motto asserted itself—'nemo me impune lacessit.' The ringleaders of various mobs were arrested and

Digitized by Google

sent for trial, but the Scotch juries, following the recent example of the Irish, refused to convict. Brewers all over Scotland entered into a sort of league by virtue of which they pledged themselves not to give any securities for the new duty and to cease brewing if the Government exacted it. Unluckily for Walpole, the Secretary of State for Scotland, the Duke of Roxburgh, was a great friend of Carteret's, and had joined with Carteret in endeavouring to thwart Walpole in all his undertakings. The success of Walpole's policy in any instance was understood by Carteret and by Roxburgh to mean Walpole's supremacy over all other ministers. The Duke of Roxburgh therefore took advantage of the crisis in Scotland to injure the administration, and especially to injure Walpole. In a subtle and underhand way he contrived to favour and foment the disturbance. He took care that the orders of the Government should not be too quickly carried out, and he gave more than a tacit encouragement to the common rumour that the King in his heart was hostile to the new tax, that the tax was wholly an invention of Walpole's, and that resistance to such a measure would not be unwelcome to the Sovereign, and would lead to the dismissal of the minister. Walpole was not long in finding out the treachery of the Duke of Roxburgh. To adopt a homely phrase, he 'took the bull by the horns' at once. Lord Townshend was in Hanover with the King, and Walpole wrote to Lord Townshend, giving him a full account of all that was going on in Scotland, and laying the chief blame for the continuance of the disturbance on the Duke of

Digitized by Google

Roxburgh. 'I beg leave to observe,' wrote Walpole, 'that the present administration is the first that was ever yet known to be answerable for the whole Government with a Secretary of State for one part of the kingdom who, they are assured, acts counter to all their measures, or at least whom they cannot confide in.' His remonstrance had to be pressed again and again upon Townshend before anything was done to satisfy him. Walpole, however, was a man to press where he thought the occasion demanded it, and he was successful in the end. The Duke of Roxburgh had to resign, and Walpole added to his own duties those of the Secretary of State for Scotland. He appointed, however, as his agent or deputy in the administration of Scotland the Earl of Isla, Lord-Keeper of the Privy Seal in that country, and a man on whose allegiance he could entirely rely. Having thus secured a full power to act, Walpole was not long in bringing the disturbances to an end. He displayed both discretion and resolve. He was able to satisfy the most reasonable among the brewers and maltsters that their interests would not really suffer by the proposed resolutions. The natural result was that the combination of brewers began to melt away. The brewers held a meeting, and it was soon found that it would not be possible to secure a general resolution to meet the legislation of the Government by passive resistance and by ceasing to brew. As all would not stand together, every man was left to take his own course, and the result was that what we should now call a strike came quietly to an end.

Digitized by Google

A modern reader is naturally shocked and surprised at the manner in which members of the same Government in Walpole's day intrigued against one another, and strove to thwart each other's policy. No actual defence is to be made for such a practice; but it is only fair to observe that up to Walpole's own entrance into office, and after it, the habit of English sovereigns had been to make up an administration by taking members of different and even of opposing parties and bringing them together, in the hope of securing thereby the co-operation of all parties. Under these circumstances it was natural, it was only to be expected, that the minister who was pledged to one policy would endeavour by all means in his power to counteract the designs of the minister whom he knew to be pledged to a very different kind of policy. Nor, indeed, is the practice of intrigue and counter-intrigue among members of the same cabinet actually unknown in our own days, when there is not the same excuse to be pleaded for it that might have been urged in the time of Walpole. In the case of the Duke of Roxburgh, however, the attempt to counteract the policy of Walpole was made in somewhat bolder and less subtle fashion than was common even in those days, and Walpole was well justified in the course he took. For once his high-handed way of dealing with men was vindicated by its principle and by the unqualified advantage it brought to the interests of the State and to those of the minister as well.

The student of history derives one satisfaction from the frequent visits of King George to Hanover.

Digitized by Google

The correspondence between Walpole and Townshend which was made necessary by those visits gives us many an interesting glimpse into political affairs in their reality, in their undress, in their secret movement, which no ordinary State papers or diplomatic despatches could be trusted to give. The Secretary of State often communicates to the representative of his country at some foreign court only just that view of a political situation which he wishes to put under the eyes of the foreign sovereign and foreign statesmen. But Walpole writes to Townshend exactly what he himself believes, and what it is important both to Townshend and to him that Townshend shall fully know. 'I think,' Walpole says to Townshend in one of his letters, 'we have once more got Ireland and Scotland quiet, if we take care to keep them so.' Exactly; if only care be taken to keep them so. The same chance had often been given to English statesmen before; Ireland and Scotland quiet, and might have continued in quietness if care had only been taken to keep them so.

The King was much pleased with Walpole's success. He made him one of the thirty-eight Knights of the Bath. The Order of the Bath had gone out of use, out of existence in fact, since the coronation of Charles the Second; George the First revived it in 1725, and bestowed its honours on Walpole. It seems an odd sort of reward for the shrewd, practical, and somewhat coarse-fibred squire-statesman. The close connection between man and the child, civilised man and the savage, is never more

Digitized by Google

clearly illustrated than in the joy and pride which the wisest statesman feels in the wearing of a ribbon or a star. In the next year the King made Walpole a Knight of the Garter; after this honour all other mark of dignity would be but an anti-climax. From the time of his introduction to the Order of the Bath, the great minister ceased to be plain Mr. Walpole, and became Sir Robert Walpole.

Meanwhile, under Walpole's Order of the Bath, many a throb of pain must have made itself felt. The minister began to find himself harassed by the most formidable opposition that had ever set itself against him. Lord Carteret was out of the way for the moment—and only for the moment; but Pulteney proved a much more pertinacious, ingenious, and dangerous enemy than Carteret had hitherto been. Pulteney was at one time the faithful follower, the enthusiastic admirer, almost the devotee, of Walpole. The one great political defect of Walpole filled him with faults. He could not bear the idea of a divided rule; he would be all or nothing; he would have clerks and servants for his colleagues in office; not real ministers, actual statesmen. He was under the mistaken impression that a man of genius is to be reduced to tame insignificance by merely keeping him out of important office. He had made this mistake with regard to Carteret; he made it now with regard to Pulteney. The consequences were far more serious: for Pulteney was neither so good-humoured nor so indolent as Carteret, and he could not be put aside.

Pulteney was a man of singular eloquence, and

Digitized by Google

of eloquence peculiarly adapted to the House of Commons. His style was brilliant, incisive, and penetrating. He could speak on any subject at the spur of the moment. He never delivered a set speech. He was a born parliamentary debater. All his resources seemed to be at instant command, according as he had need of them. His reading was wide, deep, and varied; he was a most accomplished classical scholar, and had a marvellous readiness and aptitude for classical allusion. He was a wit and a humourist; he could brighten the dullest topics and make them sparkle by odd and droll illustrations, as well as by picturesque allusions and eloquent phrases. He could, when the subject called for it, break suddenly into thrilling invective. But he had some of the defects of the extemporaneous orator. His eloquence, his wit, his epigrams often carried him away from his better judgment. He frequently committed himself to some opinion which was not really his, and was led far from his proper position in the pursuit of some paradox, or by the charm of some fantastic idea. He was a brilliant writer as well as a brilliant speaker. His private character would have little blame if it were not that a fondness for money kept growing with his growing years. 'For a good old-gentlemanly vice,' says Byron, 'I think I must take up with avarice.' Pulteney did not even wait to be an old gentleman to take up with 'the good old-gentlemanly vice.' We have in some measure now to take his talents on trust, as we have those of Carteret. He proved to be little more than the comet of a season; when he had gone,

Digitized by Google

he left no line of light behind him. But it is certain that in the estimation of his contemporaries he was one of the most gifted men of his time; and for a while he was the most popular man in England—the darling and the hero of the multitude. When Walpole was sent to the Tower in the late Queen's reign, Pulteney had spoken up manfully for his friend. When Townshend and Walpole resigned office in 1717, Pulteney went resolutely with them and resigned office also. The time came when Walpole found himself triumphant over all his enemies, and came back not merely to office, but likewise to power. Naturally, Pulteney expected that Walpole would invite him to fill some place of importance in the new administration. Walpole did nothing of the kind. He had seen ample evidence of Pulteney's great Parliamentary talents in the meantime, and he feared that with Pulteney for an official colleague he could never be a dictator. He was anxious, however, not to offend Pulteney; and he had the curious weakness to imagine that he could conciliate Pulteney by offering him a peerage. Even at that time, when the sceptre of popular power had not yet passed altogether into the hands of the representative chamber, it was absurd to suppose that Pulteney would consent to be withdrawn from the House in which he had made his fame, which was his natural and fitting place, and which already was seen by every man of sense to be the central force of England's political life. Pulteney contemptuously refused the peerage. From that hour his old love for Walpole seems to have turned into hate.

Digitized by Google

The explosion, however, did not come at once. Pulteney continued to be on seemingly good terms with Walpole, and shortly afterwards the comparatively humble post of Cofferer to the Household was offered to him—some say was asked for by him. It does not seem likely that even then he had any intention of a serious reconciliation with Walpole. Perhaps he accepted this post in the expectation that he would shortly be raised to a much higher position in the State. But Walpole, although willing enough to give him any mark or place of honour on condition that he withdrew to the House of Lords, was afraid to allow him any office of influence while he remained in the Commons. However this may be, Pulteney's ambition was not satisfied, and he very soon broke publicly away from Walpole altogether. When a motion was brought on in April 1725 for discharging the debts of the Civil List, in reply to a message from the King himself, Pulteney demanded an inquiry into the manner in which the money had been spent, and even made a fierce attack on the whole administration, and accused it of something very like downright corruption. He was dismissed from his office as Cofferer, and, even making allowance for his love of money, the wonder is that he should have held it long enough to be dismissed from it. He then went avowedly over into the ranks of the enemies of Walpole inside and outside the House of Commons.

The position taken by Pulteney is chiefly interesting to us now in the fact that it opened a distinctly new chapter in English politics. Pulteney created the

Digitized by Google

part of what has ever since been called the Leader of Opposition. With him begins the time when the real Leader of Opposition must have a place in the House of Commons ; with him, too, begins the time when the Opposition has for its recognised duty not merely to watch with jealous care all the acts of the ministers in order to prevent them from doing anything wrong, but also to watch for every opportunity of turning them out of office. With Pulteney and his tactics began the party organisation which inside the House of Commons and outside works unceasingly with tongue and pen, with open antagonism and underhand intrigue, with all the various social as well as political influences—the pamphlet, the press, the petticoat, and even the pulpit—to discredit everything done by the men in office, to turn public opinion against them, and if possible to overthrow them. Pulteney and his supporters were now and then somewhat more unscrupulous in their measures than an English Opposition would be in our time, but theirs was unquestionably the policy of all our more modern English parties. From this time forth almost to the close of his active career as a politician Pulteney performed the part of Leader of Opposition in the strictly modern sense. His position in history seems to us to be distinctly marked as that of the first Leader of Opposition ; whether history shows reason to thank him for creating such a part is another and a different question.

Pulteney had some powerful allies. The King, as we know, hated his son the Prince of Wales ; the

Digitized by Google

Prince of Wales hated his father. No reconciliation got up between them could be lasting or real. The father and son hardly ever met except on the occasion of some great public ceremonial. The standing quarrel between the Sovereign and his heir had the effect of creating two parties in political life, one of which supported the King and the King's advisers, while the other found its centre in the house of the Heir to the Throne. We shall see this condition of things re-appearing in all the subsequent reigns of the Georges. The ministry and their friends were detested and denounced by those who surrounded the Prince of Wales; the adherents of the Prince of Wales were virtually proscribed by the King. Then, as at a later date in the history of the Georges, those who favoured and were favoured by the Prince were looking out with anxious hope for the King's death. When 'the old King is dead as nail in door,' then indeed each leading supporter of the new king believed he could say with Falstaff, 'The laws of England are at my commandment; happy are they which have been my friends.' Pulteney and his supporters were among the friends and favourites of the Prince of Wales; they constituted the Prince's party. The Prince's party was composed mainly of the men who were Tories but were not Jacobites, and of the Whigs who disliked Walpole or had been overlooked or offended by him, or who in sober honesty were opposed to his policy. In all these, and in a daily growing number of the people out of doors, Pultency had his friends and Walpole his enemies.

Digitized by Google

But a more formidable rival than even Pulteney was now again to the front and active in hostility to Walpole. This was the man whom the official records of the time described as 'the late Viscount Bolingbroke.' The late Viscount Bolingbroke, it need hardly be said, means that Henry St. John whose title of Viscount had been forfeited when he fled to France and joined the Pretender. Bolingbroke had lately received the pardon of King George. He had secured the pardon chiefly by means of an influence then familiar and recognised in politics—that of one of the King's mistresses. Bolingbroke had got money with his second wife, and through her he conveyed to the Duchess of Kendal a large sum—about ten thousand pounds—with the intimation that more would be forthcoming from the same place, if necessary, to obtain his object. The Duchess of Kendal was easily prevailed upon, under these circumstances, to recognise the justice of Bolingbroke's claim and the sincerity of his repentance. Moreover, there was about the same time that political intrigue, or rather rivalry of intrigues, going on between Walpole and Carteret, between England and France, in which it was thought the influence of Bolingbroke might be used with advantage—as it was, in fact, used—to Walpole's ends. For all these reasons the pardon was obtained, and Bolingbroke was allowed to return to England. Nor was he long put off with a mere forgiveness which kept from him his forfeited estates and his right to the family inheritance. 'Here I am,'

Digitized by Google

he wrote to Swift soon after, 'two-thirds restored, my person safe (unless I meet hereafter with harder treatment than even that of Sir Walter Raleigh), and my estate, with all the other property I have acquired, or may acquire, secured to me. But the attainder is kept prudently in force, lest so corrupt a member should come again into the House of Lords and his bad leaven should sour that sweet, untainted mass.' Walpole was quite willing that the forfeiture of Lord Bolingbroke's estates and the interruption of the inheritance should be recalled. It was necessary for this purpose to pass an Act of Parliament. On April 20, 1725, Lord Finch presented to the House of Lords the petition 'of Henry St. John, late Viscount Bolingbroke.' The petition set forth that the petitioner was 'truly concerned for his offence in not having surrendered himself, pursuant to the directions of an Act of the first year of his Majesty's reign'; that he had lately, 'in most humble and dutiful manner,' made his submission to the King, and given his Majesty 'the strongest assurances of his inviolable fidelity, and of his zeal for his Majesty's service and for the support of the present happy establishment, which his Majesty hath been most graciously pleased to accept.' The petition then prayed that leave might be given to bring in a bill to enable the petitioner, and his heirs male, to take and enjoy in person the estates of which he was then or afterwards should be possessed. Walpole, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, informed the House that he had received his Majesty's command to say that George was satisfied with Boling-

Digitized by Google

broke's penitence, was convinced that Lord Bolingbroke was a proper object of mercy, and consented that the petition should be presented to the House.

Lord Finch then moved that a bill be brought in to carry out the prayer of the petition. The Chancellor of the Exchequer seconded and strongly advocated the motion. It was opposed with great vigour by Mr. Methuen, the Controller of the Household, and formerly British Minister in Portugal. Methuen denounced Bolingbroke's 'scandalous and villainous conduct,' during his administration of affairs in Queen Anne's reign; his clandestine negotiation for peace; his insolent behaviour towards the allies of England; his sacrificing the interests of the whole Confederacy, and the honour of his country—more especially in the abandonment of the Catalans; 'and, to sum up all his crimes in one, his traitorous design of defeating the Protestant succession, and of advancing a Popish pretender to the throne.' This speech, we read, 'made a great impression on the Assembly,' and several distinguished members, Arthur Onslow among the rest, spoke strongly on the same side. The motion, however, was carried by 231 votes against 113. The bill was prepared, and went up to the House of Lords on May 5, was carried there by a large majority, was sent back to the House of Commons with some slight amendments, was accepted there, and received the Royal assent. Some of the peers put on record a strong and earnest protest against the passing of such a measure. The protest

Digitized by Google

recited all the charges against Bolingbroke; declared that those who signed it knew of no particular public services which Bolingbroke had lately rendered, and which would entitle him to a generous treatment; and further added that 'no assurances which this person hath given' could be a sufficient security against his future insincerity; 'he having already so often violated the most solemn assurances and obligations, and in defiance of them having openly attempted the dethroning his Majesty, and the destruction of the liberties of his country.'

Bolingbroke, however, wanted something more than restoration to his title and to his forfeited right of inheritance. His active and untamed spirit was eager for political strife again; and his heart burned with a longing to take his old place in the debates of the House of Lords. Against this Walpole had made a firm resolve; on this point he would not yield. He would not allow his eloquent and daring rival to have a voice in Parliament any more. In this, as it seems to us, Walpole acted neither wisely nor magnanimously. Bolingbroke's safest place, so far as the interests of the public, and even the political interests of his rivals, were concerned, would have been in the House of Lords. He would have delivered brilliant speeches there, and would have worked off his energies in that harmless fashion. In Walpole's time, however, the idea had not yet arisen that an enemy to the settled order of things is least dangerous where he is most free to speak. Bolingbroke, who had always hated Walpole, even lately

Digitized by Google

when he was professing regard and gratitude, hated him now more than ever, and set to work by all the means in his power to injure Walpole in the estimation of the country, and, if possible, to undermine his whole political position.

Bolingbroke and Pulteney soon came into political companionship. There was a certain affinity between the intellectual nature of the two men; and they had now a common object. Both were literary men as well as politicians, and they naturally put their literary gifts to the fullest account in the campaign they had undertaken. In our days two such men combining for such a purpose would contrive to get incessant leading articles into some daily paper; perhaps would start a weekly or even a daily evening paper of their own. Bolingbroke and Pulteney were men in advance of their age; in some respects at least. They did between them start a paper. They established the famous *Craftsman.* The *Craftsman* was started in 1726. It was first issued daily in single leaves or sheets after the fashion of the *Spectator.* It was soon, however, changed into a weekly newspaper bearing the title of the *Craftsman* or *Country Journal.* Its editor, Nicholas Amhurst, took the feigned name of Caleb D'Anvers, and the paper itself was commonly called *Caleb* accordingly. The *Craftsman* was brilliantly written, and was inspired by the most unscrupulous passion of partisan hate. Walpole was held up in prose and verse, in bold invective and droll lampoon, as a traitor to the country; as a man stuffed and gorged with public plunder, audacious in his

Digitized by Google

profligate disregard of political principle and common honesty, a danger to the State and a disgrace to Parliamentary life. The circulation of the *Craftsman* at one time surpassed that of the *Spectator*, at the height of the *Spectator's* popularity. Not always are more flies caught by honey than by vinegar.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XVII.

'OSNABRUCK! OSNABRUCK!'

THE impeachment of Lord Macclesfield was ascribed, rightly or wrongly, to the influence of the Prince of Wales; the comparative leniency of Lord Macclesfield's punishment to the favour and protection of the King. Macclesfield was a justly distinguished judge. He had had the highest standing at the bar; had risen, step by step, until from plain Thomas Parker, the son of an attorney, he became Chief Justice of the Court of King's Bench, then one of the Lords Justices of the kingdom in the interval between Anne's death and the arrival of George the First, and finally Lord Chancellor. George made him Baron, and subsequently Earl, of Macclesfield. He had always borne a high reputation for probity, as well as for generosity, until the charge was made against him on which he was impeached. He was accused of having, while Lord Chancellor, sold the offices of Masters in Chancery to incompetent persons and men of straw, unfit to be entrusted with the money of suitors, but whom he had publicly represented to be 'persons of great fortunes, and in every respect qualified for that trust;' with having extorted money from several of the masters, and with having embezzled the estates

Digitized by Google

of widows and orphans. On May 6, 1725, the managers of the House of Commons appeared at the bar of the House of Lords, and presented their articles of impeachment against Macclesfield. The trial took place at the bar of the House, and not in Westminster Hall, where impeachments were usually carried on, and it lasted until May 26. There was nothing that could be called a defence to some of the charges, and as to others Lord Macclesfield simply insisted that he had followed the example of some of his most illustrious predecessors, and that the moneys he received as presents were reckoned among the known perquisites of the Great Seal, and were not declared unlawful by any Act of Parliament. The Lords were unanimous in finding Macclesfield guilty, and condemned him to be fined thirty thousand pounds, and to be imprisoned in the Tower until the fine had been paid. The motion that he be declared for ever incapable of any office, place, or employment in the State was, however, rejected; as was also a motion to prohibit him from ever sitting in Parliament, or coming within the verge of the court. It would certainly seem as if these motions ought to have been the natural and necessary consequence of the impeachment and the conviction. If the conviction were just—and it was obviously just—then Lord Macclesfield had disgraced the highest bench of justice, and merely to condemn him to disgorge a part of his plunder was a singularly inadequate sort of punishment. George the First, however, chose to ascribe the impeachment to the malice and

Digitized by Google

the influence of the Prince of Wales, and when Macclesfield had paid the fine by the mortgage of an estate, the King undertook to repay the money to him. George actually did pay to Macclesfield one instalment of a thousand pounds; but fate interposed and prevented any further payment. Macclesfield retired from the world, and spent his remaining years in the study of science, and in religious meditation. He died in 1732. His was a strange story. He had many of the noblest qualities; he had had, on the whole, a great career. It is not easy, if we may borrow the words which Burke applied to a more picturesque and interesting sufferer, 'to contemplate without emotion that elevation and that fall.'

During all this time of comparative quietude, we are not to suppose that there were no threatenings of foreign disturbance. The adherents of the Stuarts were never at rest; the controversies which grew out of the Treaty of Utrecht were always sputtering and menacing. Cardinal Fleury, a statesman devoted to peace and economy, had become Prime Minister of France. Other new figures were arising on the field of continental politics. Alberoni, in exile and disgrace, had been succeeded by a burlesque imitation of him, the Duke of Ripperda, a Dutch adventurer who turned diplomatist, and had risen into influence through Alberoni's favour. In 1725 Ripperda negotiated a secret treaty between the Emperor, Charles the Sixth, and the King of Spain, and was rewarded with the title of duke. He became Prime Minister of Spain for a short time, to be presently disgraced and

Digitized by Google

thrown into prison, quite after the fashion of a royal favourite in the pages of 'Gil Blas.' He was a fantastic, arrogant, feather-headed creature, an Alberoni of the opera bouffe. He betook himself at last to the service of the Sovereign of Morocco. England had a sort of Ripperda of her own in the person of the wild Duke of Wharton, the man whose eloquent and ferocious invective had contributed to the sudden death of Lord Stanhope, and who had since that time devoted himself to the service of James Stuart on the Continent, and actually fought as a volunteer in the ranks of the Spanish army at the abortive siege of Gibraltar. It is to the credit of the sincerer and better supporters of the Stuart cause, that they would not even still consent to regard it as wholly lost. They kept their eyes fixed on England, and every murmur of national discontent or disturbance became to them a new encouragement, a fresh signal of hope, a reviving incitement to energy. In England men were constantly hearing rumours about the dissolute life of the Chevalier, and his quarrels with his wife Clementina Maria, a granddaughter of one of the Kings of Poland. The loyalists here at home were ready to believe anything that could be said by anybody to the discredit of James and his adherents; James and his adherents were willing to be fed on any tales about the unpopularity of George the First, and the tottering condition of his throne. Nor could it be said that George was popular with any class of persons in England. If the reign of the Brunswicks depended upon personal popularity, it would not

Digitized by Google

have endured for many years. But the people of England were able to see clearly enough that George allowed his great minister to rule for him, and that Walpole's policy meant prosperity and peace. They did not admire George's mistresses any more now than they had done when first these ladies set their large feet on English soil; but even some of the most devoted followers of the Stuart cause shook their heads sadly over the doings of James in Italy, and could not pretend to say that the cause of morality would gain much by a change from Brunswick to Stuart.

The end was very near for George. He was now an old man, in his sixty-eighth year, and he had not led a life to secure a long lease of health. His excesses in eating and drinking, his hot punch, and his many mistresses, had proved too much even for his originally robust constitution. Of late he had become a mere wreck. He was eager to pay one other visit to Hanover, and he embarked at Greenwich on June 3, 1727, landing in Holland on the 7th of the month. He made for his capital as quickly as he could, but in the course of the journey he was attacked by a sort of lethargic paralysis. Early on June 10 he was seized with an apoplectic fit; his hands hung motionless by his sides, his eyes were fixed, glassy, and staring, and his tongue protruded from his mouth. The sight of him horrified his attendants; they wished to stop at once and secure some assistance for the poor old dying King. George, however, recovered consciousness so far as to be able to insist on pursuing his journey,

Digitized by Google

crying out, with spasmodic efforts at command, the words 'Osnabruck! Osnabruck!' At Osnabruck lived his brother the Prince-Bishop. The attendants dared not disobey George, even at that moment, and the carriage drove at its fullest speed on towards Osnabruck. No swiftness of wheels, however, no flying chariot, could have reached the house of the Prince-Bishop in time for the King. When the royal carriages clattered into the courtyard of the Prince-Bishop's palace the reign of the first George was over—the old King lay dead in his seat. Lord Townshend and the Duchess of Kendal were following in different carriages on the road; an express was sent back to tell them the grim news. Lord Townshend came on to Osnabruck, and, finding that the King was dead, had nothing to do but to return home at once. The Duchess of Kendal is stated to have shown all the signs of grief proper to be expected from a favourite. She tore her hair—at least she pulled and clutched at it—and she beat her ample bosom, and professed the uttermost horror at the thought of having to endure life without the companionship of her lord and master. It is satisfactory, however, to know that she did not die of grief. She lived for some sixteen years, and made her home for the most part at Kendal House, near Twickenham.

Even such a man as George the First may become invested by death with a certain dignity and something of a romantic interest. Legends are afloat concerning the King's later days which would not be altogether unworthy the closing hours of a great

Digitized by Google

Roman emperor. George had his melting moments, it would seem, and not long before his death, being in a pathetic mood, he gave the Duchess of Kendal a pledge that if he should die before her and it were possible for departed souls to return to earth and impress the living with a knowledge of their presence, he, the faithful and aged lover, would come back from the grave to his mistress. When the Duchess of Kendal returned to her home near Twickenham she was in constant expectation of a visit in some form from her lost adorer. One day while the windows of her house were open, a large black raven, or bird of some kind—raven would seem to be the more becoming and appropriate form for such a visitor—flew into her presence from the outer air. The lamenting lady assumed at once that in this shape the soul of King George had come back to earth. She cherished and petted the bird, it is said, and lavished all fondness and tenderness upon it. What became of it in the end history does not allow us to know. Whether it still is sitting, like the more famous raven of poetry, it is not for us to guess. Probably when the Duchess herself expired in 1743 the ghastly, grim, and ancient raven disappeared with her. Why George the First, if he had the power of returning in any shape to see his mistress, did not come in his own proper form, it is not for us to explain. One might be disposed to imagine that in such a case it would be the first step which would involve the cost, and that there would be no greater difficulty for the departed soul to come back in the likeness of its old vestment of clay than

Digitized by Google

to put on the unfamiliar and somewhat inconvenient form of a fowl. Perhaps the story is not true. Possibly there was no raven or other bird in the case at all. It may be that, if a black raven did fly in at the Duchess of Kendal's window, the bird was not the embodied spirit of King George. For ourselves, we should be sorry to lose the story. Neither the King nor the mistress could afford to part with any slight element of romance wherewithal even legend has chosen to invest them. Another story, which probably has more truth in it, adds a new ghastliness to the circumstances of George's death. On November 13, 1726, some seven months before that event, there died in a German castle a woman whom the gazette of the capital described as the Electress Dowager of Hanover. This was the unfortunate Princess Sophia, the wife of George. Thirty-two years of melancholy captivity she had endured, while George was drinking and hoarding money and amusing himself with his seraglio of ugly women. She died protesting her innocence to the last. In the closing days of her illness, so runs the story, she gave into the hands of some one whom she could trust a letter, addressed to her husband, and obtained a promise that the letter should, somehow or other, be delivered to George himself. This letter contained a final declaration that she was absolutely guiltless of the offence alleged against her, a bitter reproach to George for his ruthless conduct, and a solemn summons to him to stand by her side before the judgment seat of Heaven within a year, and there make answer

Digitized by Google

in her presence for the wrongs he had done her, for her blighted life and her miserable death. There was no way of getting this letter into George's hands while the King was in England; but an arrangement was made by means of which it was put into his coach when he crossed the frontier of Germany on his way towards his capital. George, it is said, opened the letter at once, and was so surprised and horror-stricken by its stern summons that he fell that moment into the apoplectic fit from which he never recovered. Sophia, therefore, had herself accomplished her own revenge; her reproach had killed the King; her summons brought him at once within the ban of that judgment to which she had called him. It would be well if one could believe the story; there would seem a dramatic justice—a tragic retribution—about it. Its very terror would dignify the story of a life that, on the whole, was commonplace and vulgar. But, for ourselves, we confess that we cannot believe in the mysterious letter, the fatal summons, the sudden fulfilment. There are too many stories of the kind floating about history to allow us to attach any special significance to this particular tale. We doubt even whether, if the letter had been written, it would have greatly impressed the mind of George. Remorse for the treatment of his wife he could not have felt—he was incapable of any such emotion; and we question whether any appeal to the sentiment of the supernatural, any summons to another and an impalpable world, would have made much impression on that stolid, prosaic intelligence and that heart of lead.

Digitized by Google

Besides, according to some versions of the tale, it was not, after all, a letter from his wife which impressed him, but only the warning of a fortune-teller—a woman who admonished the King to be careful of the life of his imprisoned consort, because it was fated for him that he should not survive her a year. This story, too, is told of many kings and other persons less illustrious.

Much more probable is the rumour that Sophia made a will bequeathing all her personal property to her son, that the will was given to George the First in England, and that he composedly destroyed it. If George committed this act, he seems to have been repaid in kind. His own will left large legacies to the Duchess of Kendal, and to other ladies. The Archbishop of Canterbury gave the will to the new King, who read it, put it in his pocket, walked away with it, and never produced it again. Both these stories are doubted by some of the contemporaries of George the Second, but they were firmly believed in and strongly asserted by others, who seem to have had authority for their belief. At all events, they fit in better with the character and surroundings of both princes than the tragic story of the letter and its fearful summons, the warning of the fortune-teller, or the soul of the dead King revisiting the earth in the funereal form of a raven.

There is not much that is good to be said of George the First. He had a certain prosaic honesty, and was frugal amid all his vulgar voluptuousness. He managed the expenses of his court with creditable

Digitized by Google

economy and regularity. The officers in his army, and his civil servants, received their pay at the properly-appointed time. It would be hardly worth while recording these particulars to the King's credit, but that it was somewhat of a novelty in the arrangements of a modern court for men to receive the reward of their services at regular intervals, and in the proper amount. George occasionally did a liberal thing, and he more than once professed a strong interest in the improvement of university education. He is said to have declared to a German nobleman, who was complimenting him on the possession of two such kingdoms as England and Hanover, that a king ought to be congratulated rather on having two such subjects as Newton in the one country and Leibnitz in the other. We fear, however, that this story must go with the fortune-teller and the raven; one cannot think of dull prosaic George uttering such a monumental sort of sentiment. He cared nothing for literature, or science, or art. He seems to have had no genuine friendships. He hated his son, and he used to speak of his daughter-in-law, Caroline, as 'that she-devil the princess.' Whatever was respectable in his character came out best at times of trial. He was not a man whom danger could make afraid. At the most critical moments—as, for instance, at the outbreak of the rebellion in 1715—he never lost his head. If he was not capable of seeing far, he saw clearly, and he could look coming events steadily in the face. On one or two occasions, when an important choice had to be made between this political

Digitized by Google

course and that, he chose quickly and well. The fact that he thoroughly appreciated the wisdom and the political integrity of Walpole speaks, perhaps, his highest praise. His reign, on the whole, was one of prosperity for England. He did not love England,—never, up to the very end, cared for the country over which destiny had appointed him to rule. His soul to the last was faithful to Hanover. England was to him as the State wife whom for political reasons he was compelled to marry; Hanover, as the sweetheart and mistress of his youth, to whom his affections, such as they were, always clung, and whom he stole out to see at every possible chance. George behaved much better to his political consort, England, than to the veritable wife of his bosom. He managed England's affairs for her like an honest, straightforward, narrow-minded steward. We shall see hereafter that England came to be governed much worse by men not nearly so bad as George the First. To do him justice, he knew when he ought to leave the business of the State in the hands of those who understood it better than he; this one merit redeemed many of his faults, and, perhaps, may be regarded as having secured his dynasty. Frederick the Great described George as a prince who governed England by respecting liberty, even while he made use of the subsidies granted by Parliament to corrupt the Parliament which voted them. He was a king, Frederick declares, 'without ostentation and without deceit,' and who won by his conduct the confidence of Europe. This latter part of the description

Digitized by Google

is a little too polite. Kings do not criticise each other too keenly in works that are meant for publication. But the words form, on the whole, an epitaph for George which might be inscribed on his tomb without greater straining of the truth than is common in the monumental inscriptions that adorn the graves of less exalted persons.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XVIII.

GEORGE THE SECOND.

THE year when George the First died was made memorable for ever by the death of a far greater man than any European king of that generation. When describing the events which led to the publication of the 'Drapier's Letters,' we mentioned the fact that Sir Isaac Newton had been consulted about the coinage of Wood's halfpence. That was the last time that Isaac Newton appeared as a living figure in public controversy of any kind. On March 20, 1727, the great philosopher died, after much suffering, at his house in Kensington. The epitaph which Pope intended for him sums up as well as a long discourse could do his achievements in science—

> Nature and Nature's laws lay hid in night;
> God said, 'Let Newton be,' and all was light.

No other discovery ever made in science approaches in importance to the discovery of the principle of universal gravitation,—the principle that every particle of matter is attracted by every other particle with a force proportioned inversely to the square of their distances. Vague ideas of some such principle had long been floating in the minds of some men; had

Digitized by Google

probably been thus floating since ever men began to think seriously over the phenomena of inanimate nature. But the discovery of the principle was, however, as distinctly the achievement of Newton as 'Paradise Lost' is the work of Milton. We find it hard now to form to ourselves any clear idea of a world to which Newton's principle was unknown. It would be almost as easy to realise the idea of a world without light or atmosphere. Newton is called by Sir David Brewster the greatest philosopher of any age. Sir John Herschel assigns to the name of Newton 'a place in our veneration which belongs to no other in the annals of science.' In this book we have only to record the date at which the pure and simple life of this great man came to its end. The important events of his career belong to an earlier period; his teachings and his fame are for all time. The humblest of historians as well as the greatest may ask himself what is the principle of history which bids us to assign so much more space to the wars of kings and the controversies of statesmen than to the life and the deeds of a man like Newton. In the whole history of the world during Newton's lifetime the one most important fact, the one fact of which the magnitude dwarfs all other facts, is the discovery of the principle of gravitation. Yet its meaning may be explained in fewer words than would be needed to describe the nature of the antagonism between Walpole and Pulteney, or the reason why Queen Anne was succeeded by King George.

We have, however, in these pages only to deal with

Digitized by Google

history in its old and, we suppose, its everlasting fashion—that of telling what happened in the way of actual fact, telling the story of the time. The English public took the death of George the First with becoming composure. The vast majority of the people never troubled their heads about it. It gave a flutter of hope to Spain; it set the councils of the Stuart party in eager commotion for a while; but it made no change in England. 'George the First was always reckoned Vile; still viler George the Second.' These are the lines in which Walter Savage Landor sums up the characters of the first and second Georges before passing on to picture in little the characters of the third and fourth of the name. Landor was not wrong when he described George the Second as, on the whole, rather worse than George the First. George the Second was born at Hanover on October 30, 1683, and was therefore in his forty-fourth year when he succeeded to the throne. He had still less natural capacity than his father. He was parsimonious; he was avaricious; he was easily put out of temper. His instincts, feelings, passions, were all purely selfish. He had hot hatreds, and but cool friendships. Personal courage was, perhaps, the only quality becoming a sovereign which George the Second possessed. He had served as a volunteer under Marlborough in 1708, and at the battle of Oudenarde he had headed a charge of his Hanoverian dragoons with a bravery worthy of a prince. He is to serve later on at Dettingen, and to be in all probability the last English sovereign who commanded in person on the battlefield. His educa-

Digitized by Google

tion was not even so good as that of his father, and he had an utter contempt for literature. He had little religious feeling, but is said to have had a firm belief in the existence of vampires. He was fond of business—devoted to the small ways of routine. He took a great interest in military matters and all that concerned the arrangements and affairs of an army. Like his father, he found abiding pleasure in the society of a little group of more or less attractive mistresses.

George the Second had always detested his father, and during the greater part of their lives was equally detested by him. The reconciliation which had lately taken place between them was as formal and superficial as that of the two demons described in Le Sage's story. 'They brought us together,' says Asmodeus; 'they reconciled us. We shook hands, and became mortal enemies.' When the reconciliation between George the Second and his father was brought about by the influence of Stanhope and of Walpole, the father and son shook hands and continued to be mortal enemies. If George the First had his court at St. James's, George the Second had his court and *coterie* gathered around him at Leicester Fields and at Richmond. The two courts were, in fact, little better than hostile camps. Walpole had been for long years the confidential and favoured servant of George the First. The natural expectation was that he would be instantly discredited and discarded when George the Second came to the throne.

So, indeed, it seemed at first to happen. When Walpole received the news of George the First's death

Digitized by Google

he hastened to Richmond Lodge, where George the Second then was, in order to give him the news and hail him as King. George was in bed, and had to be roused from a thick sleep. He was angry at being disturbed, and not in a humour to admit that there was any excuse for disturbing him. When Walpole told him that his father was dead the kingly answer of the sovereign was that the statesman's assertion was a big lie. George roared this at Walpole, and then was for turning round in his bed and settling down to sleep again. Walpole, however, persisted in disturbing the royal slumbers, and assured the drowsy grumbler that he really was George the Second, King of England. He produced for George's further satisfaction a letter from Lord Townshend, describing the time, place, and circumstances of the late King's death. Walpole tendered the usual ceremonial expressions of loyalty, which George received coldly, and even gruffly. Then the minister asked whom his Majesty wished to appoint to draw up the necessary declaration for the Privy Council. Walpole assumed as a matter of course that the King would leave the task in his hands. George, however, disappointed him. 'Compton,' said the King; and when he had spoken that word he intimated to Walpole that the interview was over. Walpole left the royal abode believing himself a fallen man.

'Compton,' whom the King had thus curtly designated, was Sir Spencer Compton, who had been chosen Speaker of the House of Commons in 1715. He had been one of George the Second's favourites while

Digitized by Google

George was still Prince of Wales. He was a man of respectable character, publicly and privately, but without remarkable capacity of any kind. He knew little or nothing of the business of a minister, and it is said that when Walpole came to him to tell him of the King's command he frankly acknowledged that he did not know how to draw up the formal declaration. Walpole good-naturedly came to his assistance, took his pen, and did the work for him.

If the King had persevered in his objection to Walpole, the story of the reign would have to be very differently told. Walpole was the one only man who could at the time have firmly stood between England and foreign intrigue—between England and financial blunder. Nor is it unlikely that the King would have persevered and refused to admit Walpole to office but that he happened to be, without his own knowledge, under the influence of the one only woman who had any legitimate right to influence him—his wife Caroline. Caroline, daughter of a petty German Prince—the Margrave of Brandenburg-Anspach—was one of the most remarkable women of her time. Her faults, foibles, and weaknesses only served to make her more remarkable. She had beauty when she was young, and she still had an expressive face and a sweet smile. She was well educated, and always continued to educate herself; she was fond of letters, art, politics, and metaphysics. She delighted in theological controversy, and also delighted in contests of mere wit. But of all her valuable gifts, the most valuable for herself, and for the country,

Digitized by Google

was the capacity she had for governing her husband. She governed him through his very anxiety not to be governed by his wife. One of George's strongest, and at the same time meanest, desires was to let the world see that he was absolute master in his own house, and could rule his wife with a rod of iron. Caroline, having long since discovered this weakness, played into the King's hands, and always made outward show of the utmost deference for his authority and dread of his anger. She put herself metaphorically, and indeed almost literally, under his feet. She was pleased that all the Court should see her thus grovelling. George was in the habit of making jocular allusion, in his jovial, graceful way, to living and dead sovereigns who were governed by their wives, and he often invited his courtiers to notice the difference between them and him, and to admire the imperial supremacy which he exercised over the humble Caroline. By humouring him in this way Caroline obtained, without any consciousness on his part, an almost absolute power over him. Another and a worse failing of the King's she humoured as well. She had suffered much in the beginning of her married life because of his amours and his mistresses. Her true and faithful heart had been wrung by long jealousies; but, happily for herself and for the country, she was able at last to rise superior to this natural weakness of woman. Indeed, it has to be said with regret for her self-degradation, that she not only tolerated the love-makings of the King and his favourites, but even showed occasionally a politic interest in

Digitized by Google

the promotion of the amours and the appointment of the ladies. She humoured her lord and master's avarice with as little scruple. Thus his principal defects—his sordid love of money, his ignoble passion for women, and his ridiculous desire to seem the absolute master of his wife—became in her skilful hands the leading strings by which she drew and guided him whither she would have him go. Through Caroline's influence mainly Walpole was retained in power. She played on the King's avarice, and poured into his greedy ear the assurance that Walpole could raise money as no other living man could. Caroline acted in this chiefly from a sincere love of her husband and anxiety for his good, but partly also, it has to be acknowledged, because it had been made known to her that Walpole would provide her with a larger allowance than it was Compton's intention to do. The result was that Walpole was retained in office, or perhaps it should be said restored to office. The crowds of courtiers who love to worship the rising sun had hardly time to offer their adoration to Compton when they found that the supposed rising sun was only a meteor, which instantly vanished. Horace Walpole the younger describes the event by a happy phrase as 'Compton's evaporation.' Compton himself had soon found that the responsibility would be too much for him. He besought the King to relieve him of the burden to which he found himself unequal. The King acceded to his wish. Walpole became once again First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Townshend con-

Digitized by Google

tinued to be Secretary of State. The crisis was over.

Parliament assembled on June 15, after the death of George the First. As the law then stood, any Parliament summoned by a sovereign was not to be dissolved by that sovereign's death, but should continue to sit and act during a term of six months, 'unless the same shall be sooner prorogued or dissolved by such person who shall be next heir to the Crown of this Realm in succession.' The meeting of June 15 was merely formal. Parliament was prorogued by a Commission from George the Second until the 27th of the month. Both Houses then met at Westminster, and the King came to the House of Peers in his royal robes and ascended the throne with all the regular ceremonial. Sir Charles Dalton, Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod, was sent with a message from the King, commanding the attendance of the Commons. When the Commons had crowded into the space appointed for them in the Peers' Chamber, the King 'delivered from his own mouth' the Royal Speech. George the Second had at all events one advantage over George the First as a King of England; he understood the language of his subjects, and could speak to them in their own tongue. The Royal Speech began by expressing the King's persuasion that 'you all share with me in my grief and affliction for the death of my late royal father.' The King was well warranted in this persuasion; nothing could be more correct than his assumption. The Lords and Commons quite shared with him his grief and affliction

Digitized by Google

for the death of his royal father. They felt just as much distress at that event as he did. The King then went on to declare his fixed resolution to merit by all possible means the love and affection of his people; to preserve the Constitution 'as it is now happily established in Church and State'; and to secure to all his subjects the full enjoyment of their religious and civil rights. He expressed his satisfaction at the manner in which tranquillity and the balance of power in Europe had been maintained, the strict union and harmony which had hitherto subsisted among the allies of the Treaty of Hanover, and which had chiefly contributed to the near prospect of a general peace. Finally, the King pointed out that the grant of the greatest part of his Civil List revenues had now run out, and that it would be necessary for the House of Commons to make a new provision for the support of him and of his family. 'I am persuaded,' said the King, 'that the experience of past times, and a due regard to the honour and dignity of the Crown, will prevail upon you to give me this first proof of your zeal and affection in a manner answerable to the necessities of my Government.' Then the King withdrew, and Lord Chesterfield moved for 'an address of condolence, congratulation, and thanks.' The condoling and congratulating address was unanimously voted, was presented next day to his Majesty, and received his Majesty's most gracious acknowledgment. Meanwhile, the Commons having returned to their House, several new members took the oaths. Sir Paul Methuen, Treasurer of the Household, the

Digitized by Google

author of the commercial treaty with Portugal which still bears his name, moved an address of condolence and congratulation to the King. The motion was seconded by Sir Robert Walpole, and, as the formal record puts it, 'voted *nemine contradicente*.' A committee was appointed to draw up the address, Sir Robert Walpole, of course, being one of its members. The chairman of the committee paid Walpole the compliment of handing him the pen, 'whereupon,' as a contemporary account reports it, 'Sir Robert, without hesitation, and with a masterly hand, drew up the said address.' Walpole could be courtly enough when he thought fit. He seems to have distinctly outdone the House of Lords in the fervour of his grief for the late King and his devotion to the present. The death of George the First Walpole pronounced to be 'a loss to this nation which your Majesty alone could possibly repair.' Having mentioned the fact that the death of George the First had plunged all England into grief, Walpole changed, 'as by the stroke of an enchanter's wand,' this winter of our discontent into glorious summer. 'Your immediate succession,' he assured the King, 'banished all our grief.'

On Monday, July 3, the Commons met to consider the amount of supply to be granted to his Majesty. Walpole, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, stated to the House that the annual sum of seven hundred thousand pounds granted to the late King, 'for the support of his household and of the honour and dignity of the Crown,' had fallen short every year, and that ministers had been obliged to make it up in

Digitized by Google

other ways. The present sovereign's necessary expenses were likely to increase, the Chancellor of the Exchequer explained, 'by reason of the largeness of his family, and the necessity of 'settling a household for his royal consort.' The Chancellor of the Exchequer therefore moved that the entire revenues of the Civil List, which produced about one hundred and thirty thousand pounds a year above the yearly sum of seven hundred thousand pounds already mentioned, should be settled on his Majesty during life. The motion was supported by several members, but Mr. Shippen, the earnest and able, though somewhat eccentric, Jacobite and Tory, had the spirit and courage to oppose it. Shippen's speech was expressed in a spirit of loyalty, but was direct and incisive in its criticism of the Government proposal. Shippen pointed out that the yearly sum of seven hundred thousand pounds, now thought too little, was not obtained by the late sovereign without a long and solemn debate, and was described by everyone who contended for it as an ample revenue for a King. He reminded the House that Queen Anne used to pay about nineteen thousand pounds a year out of her own pocket for the augmentation of the salaries of poor clergymen, allowed five thousand pounds a year out of the Post Office revenue to the Duke of Marlborough, gave several hundred thousand pounds for the building of the castle of Blenheim; and by this means came under the necessity of asking Parliament for five hundred thousand pounds, which she determined never to do again, and had therefore

Digitized by Google

prepared a scheme for the reduction of her expenses, which was to bring her full yearly outlay down to four hundred and fifty thousand pounds. Shippen then severely criticised the foreign policy of the late King's reign, and with justice condemned the extravagance which required to be met by repeated grants from the nation. 'I confess,' he said, 'that if the same management was to be continued, and if the same ministers were to be again employed, a million a year would not be sufficient to carry on the exorbitant expenses so often and so justly complained of in this House.' He deplored the vast sum 'sunk in the bottomless gulf of secret service. 'I heartily wish,' he exclaimed, 'that time, the great discoverer of hidden truths and concealed iniquities, may produce a list of all such—if any such there were—who have been perverted from their public duty by private pensions, who have been the hired slaves and the corrupt instruments of a profuse and vainglorious administration.' Shippen concluded by moving as an amendment that the amount granted to his Majesty be the clear yearly sum of seven hundred thousand pounds. It is worth noticing that when Shippen had occasion once to refer to some of Walpole's arguments he spoke of him as 'my honourable friend,' and then, suddenly correcting himself, said, 'I ask pardon ; I should have said the honourable person, for there is no friendship betwixt us.'

Shippen's speech hit hard, and must have been felt by the ministry. The one charge against Walpole's Government which he could not refute was the

Digitized by Google

charge of extravagance in corruption. The ministers, however, affected to treat the speech with contempt, and were justified in doing so by the manner in which the House of Commons dealt with it. No answer was given to Shippen's statements, because Shippen's motion was not seconded and fell to the ground. The resolutions proposed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer were carried without a division, and a bill was ordered to be brought in to give effect to them. A provision of one hundred thousand pounds a year was voted for the Queen, in case she should survive the King. The vote was agreed to without division or debate. Parliament was dissolved by proclamation on August 7.

The new Parliament met on January 23, 1728. It was found that the ministerial majority was even greater than it had been before. The King opened Parliament in person, and directed the Commons, who had been summoned to the House of Peers, to return to their own House and choose their Speaker. The Commons unanimously chose Arthur Onslow to this high office. Compton, the former Speaker, had been soothed with a peerage after his 'evaporation.' Arthur Onslow was born in 1691, and had been in Parliament from 1719; in July 1728 he was made Privy Councillor. We may anticipate events a little for the purpose of mentioning the fact that all the writers of his time united in ascribing to Speaker Onslow, as he has always since been called, a combination of the best attributes which fit a man to preside over the House of Commons. It is said that

Digitized by Google

his election to the Speaker's chair was brought about mainly by Sir Robert Walpole, and that Walpole expected Onslow to use his great abilities and authority to suit the policy and serve the wishes of the administration. If this was Walpole's idea, he must soon have found himself as much mistaken as the conclave of Cardinals about whom so much is said in history, romance, and the drama, who elected one of their order as Pope because they believed him to be too feeble and nerveless to have any will of his own, and were much amazed to find that the moment the new Pope had been elected he suddenly became strong and energetic—the master, and not the servant. Onslow's whole conduct in the chair of the House of Commons during the many years which he occupied it displayed an absolute and fearless impartiality. The chair has never been better filled in English history; the very title of 'Speaker Onslow,' ever afterwards given to him, is of itself a tribute to his impartiality and his services. Onslow was a man who loved letters and art, and also, it is said, loved studying all varieties of life. It is reported of him that he used to go about disguised, like a sort of eighteenth-century Haroun-al-Raschid, amongst the lowest classes of men, in out-of-the-way parts of the capital, for the purpose of studying the forms and manners of human life. Legend has preserved the memory of a certain public-house, called 'The Jews' Harp,' where Onslow is said to have amused himself many an evening sitting in the chimney-corner and exchanging talk and jests with the company who frequented the place. It is

Digitized by Google

pleasant to be able to believe these stories of Speaker Onslow in that highly artificial and formal age—that age of periwigs, and paint, and shallow formulas. It is somewhat refreshing to meet with this clever man of eccentric ways, the great 'Speaker,' who could wear his official robes with so much true dignity, and then, when he had laid them aside, could amuse himself after his own fashion, and study life in some of its queerest corners with the freshness of a schoolboy and the eye of an artist.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XIX.

'THE PATRIOTS.'

THE name and the career of William Pulteney are all but forgotten in English political life. It is doubtful whether Pulteney's name, if pronounced in the course of a debate in the House of Commons just now, would bring with it any manner of idea to the minds of nine-tenths of the listening members. Yet Pulteney played, all unconsciously, a great part in the development of the Parliamentary life of this country. So far as intellectual gifts are concerned, he is not, of course, to be named in the same breath with a man like Burke, for example; one might as well think of comparing Offenbach with Mozart or Handel. But the influence of the career of Pulteney on the English Parliament is nevertheless more distinctly marked than the influence of the career of Burke. We are speaking now not of political thought—no man ever made a greater impression on political thought than Burke has done—but only of the forms and the development of English Parliamentary systems. For Pulteney was beyond all question the founder of the modern practice of Parliamentary Opposition. Walpole was mainly instrumental in transferring the seat of political power from the House of Lords to the

Digitized by Google

House of Commons. Never, since Walpole's time, has the House of Lords exercised any real influence over the political life of England. This was not Walpole's doing; it was the doing of time and change, of altered conditions and new forces. But Walpole saw the coming change, and bent all the energies of his robust intellect to help and forward it. Pulteney is in the same sense the author of the modern principle of Parliamentary Opposition; but there is no reason to believe that Pulteney saw what he was doing as clearly as Walpole did. Until the beginning of Pulteney's brilliant career, the opposition between parties had been mainly a competition for the ear and the favour of the sovereign. Thus Harley strove against Marlborough, and Bolingbroke against Harley, and the Whigs against Harley and Bolingbroke. But the course of action taken by Pulteney against Walpole converted the struggle into one of party against party, inside and outside of the House of Commons. The object sought was the command of a majority in the representative assembly. Pulteney showed how this was to be obtained by the voices of the public out of doors as well as by the votes of the elected representatives in Westminster. Walpole had made it clear that in the House of Commons the battle was to be fought; Pulteney showed that in the House of Commons the victory was to be gained, not by the favour of the sovereign, but by the co-operation of the people.

We have said in a former chapter that Pulteney's form of procedure, become now a component part of

Digitized by Google

our whole Parliamentary system, brings with it some serious disadvantages from which, for the present, it is not easy, it is not even possible, to see any way of escape. The principle of government by party will some time or other come to be put to the challenge in English political life. For the present, however, we have only to make the best we can of it; and no one in his senses can doubt that it was an immense advance on the system of back-stairs influence and bedchamber intrigue, the policy, to use the great Condé's expression, 'of petticoats and alcoves,' which prevailed in the days when Mrs. Masham was competing with Sarah Jennings, and, later still, when Walpole was buying his way back to power through the influence of the sovereign's wife, in co-operation with the sovereign's paramour.

The student of English history will have to turn with close attention to the reigns of the First and Second Georges. In those reigns the transfer of power to the representative chamber began, and the modern system of Parliamentary opposition grew into form. The student will have to remember that the time he is studying was one when there was no such thing known in England as a public meeting. There were 'demonstrations,' as we call them now; there were crowds; there were processions; there were tumults; there were disturbances, riots, reading of Riot Acts, dispersion of mobs, charges of cavalry, *fusillades* of infantry; but there were no great public meetings called together for the discussion of

Digitized by Google

momentous political questions. The rapid growth of the popular newspaper, soon to swell up like the prophet's gourd, had hardly begun as yet. We cannot call the *Craftsman* a newspaper; it was rather a series of pamphlets. It stood Pulteney in stead of the more modern newspaper. He worked on public opinion with it outside the House of Commons. Inside the House he made it his business to form a party which should assail the ministry on all points, lie in wait to find occasion for attacking it, attack it rightly or wrongly, attack it even at the risk of exposing national weakness or bringing on national danger, keep attacking it always. In former days a leader of Opposition had often been disdainful of the opinion of the vulgar herd out of doors; Pulteney and his companions set themselves to appeal especially to the prejudices, passions, and ignorance of the vulgar herd. They made it their business to create a public opinion of their own. They dealt in the manufacture of public opinion. They set up political shops wherein to retail the article which they had thus manufactured. Pulteney was now in his prime—still some years inside fifty. He was full of energy and courage, and he threw his whole soul into his work. Much of what he did was undoubtedly dictated by his spite against Walpole, but much, too, was the mere outcome of his ambition, his energy, and the peculiar character of his intellect. He enjoyed playing a conspicuous part and he liked attacking somebody. People used to think at one time that Mr. Disraeli had a profound personal hatred

Digitized by Google

for Sir Robert Peel when he was flinging off his philippics against that great minister. It afterwards appeared clear enough that Mr. Disraeli had no particular dislike to his opponent, but that he enjoyed attacking an important statesman. Pulteney, of course, did actually begin his career of embittered opposition because of his quarrel with Walpole; but it is likely enough that even if no quarrel had ever taken place and he never had been Walpole's friend and colleague, he would sooner or later have become the foremost gladiator of opposition all the same.

The materials of opposition consisted of three political groups of men. There were the Jacobites, under Shippen; the Tories who no longer acknowledged themselves Jacobites, and who were led by Sir William Wyndham; and there were the discontented Whigs whom Pulteney led and whose discontent he turned to his own uses. It had long been a scheme of Bolingbroke's—up to this time it should perhaps rather be called a dream than a scheme—to combine these three groups into one distinct party, having its bond of union in a common detestation of Walpole. The dream now seemed likely to become a successful scheme. The conception of this plan of opposition was unquestionably Bolingbroke's and not Pulteney's; but it fell to Pulteney's lot to work it out in the House of Parliament, and he performed his task with consummate ability. Pulteney was probably the greatest leader of Opposition ever known in the House of Commons, with the single exception of Mr. Disraeli. Charles Fox, with all his splendid

Digitized by Google

genius for debate, was not a skilful or a patient leader of Opposition. Perhaps he was too great of heart for such a part; certain it is that as a leader of Opposition he made some fatal mistakes. Pulteney seemed cut out for the part which a strange combination of chances had allowed him to play. He was not merely a debater of inexhaustible resource and a master of all the trick and craft of Parliamentary leadership; but he thoroughly understood the importance of public support out of doors, and the means of getting at it and retaining it. Pulteney saw that the time had come when the English people would have their say in every political question.

By the combined influence of Pulteney and Bolingbroke, there was formed a party of ultra-Whigs, who, somewhat audaciously, called themselves 'The Patriots.' Perhaps the title was first given to them by Walpole, in contempt; if so, they accepted and adopted it. Again and again in our history this phenomenon presents itself. Some men of ability and unsatisfied ambition belonging to the Liberal party become discontented with the policy of their leaders. When the first opportunity arises, they make a public declaration against that policy. In the Conservative ranks there are to be found some other men, also able and also discontented, to whom the general policy of Opposition seems unsatisfactory and feeble. Each of these discontented parties fancies itself to be truly patriotic, public-spirited, and independent. The two factions at length unite for the common good of the country; they tell the world

Digitized by Google

that they are patriots, that they are the only patriots, and the world for a while believes them. This was the condition of things when Pulteney, in Parliament, joined with Sir William Wyndham, the extreme Jacobite, the Wyndham who is mentioned in Pope's poem about his Twickenham grotto, the Wyndham with whom Bolingbroke corresponded for many years, and to whom he addressed one of his most important political manifestoes. Sir William Wyndham belonged to an old Somersetshire family. He was a staunch Tory. He had powerful connections; his first wife was a daughter of the haughty Duke of Somerset. He entered Parliament and made a considerable figure there. He had been Secretary at War and afterwards Chancellor of the Exchequer under the Tories; he had clung to Bolingbroke's fortunes at the time of Bolingbroke's rupture with Harley. He underwent the common fate of Tory statesmen on the accession of George the First; he was deprived of office, was accused of taking part in the Jacobite conspiracy, and was committed to the Tower. There was, however, no evidence against him, and he resumed his political career. His eloquence is described by Speaker Onslow as 'strong, full, and without affectation, arising chiefly from his clearness, propriety, and argumentation; in the method of which last, by a sort of induction almost peculiar to himself, he had a force beyond any man I ever heard in public debates.' Lord Hervey, who can be trusted not to overdo the praise of any one, says of Wyndham that 'he was very far from having first-rate

Digitized by Google

parts, but by a gentleman-like general behaviour, a constant attendance in the House of Commons, a close application to the business of it, and frequent speaking, he had got a sort of Parliamentary routine, and without being a bright speaker was a popular one, well heard, and useful to his party.' So far as we now can judge, this seems a very correct estimate of Wyndham's Parliamentary capacity and position. He had a noble presence, singularly graceful and charming manners, and a high personal character. A combination between such a man as Pulteney and such a man as Wyndham could not but be formidable even to the most powerful minister.

Shippen, the leader of the Jacobites, 'honest Shippen,' as Pope calls him, we have often met already. He was a straightforward, unselfish man, absolutely given up to his principles and his party. He was well read, and had written clever pamphlets and telling satirical verses. His speeches, or such reports of them as can be got at, are full of striking passages and impressive phrases; they are speeches which even now one cannot read without interest. But it would seem that Shippen often marred the effect of his ideas and his language by a rapid, careless, and imperfect delivery. He appears to have been one of the men who wanted nothing but a clear articulation and effective utterance to be great Parliamentary debaters, and whom that single want condemned to comparative failure. Those who remember the late Sir George Cornewall Lewis, or, indeed, those who have heard the best speeches of Lord Sherbrooke when he was Mr. Robert Lowe, can

Digitized by Google

probably form a good idea of what Shippen was as a Parliamentary debater. Shippen was nothing of a statesman, and his occasional eccentricities of manner and conduct prevented him from obtaining all the influence which would otherwise have been fairly due to his talents and his political and personal integrity.

Pulteney's party had in Parliament the frequent, indeed for a time the habitual, assistance of Wyndham and of Shippen. Outside Parliament Bolingbroke intrigued, wrote, and worked with the indomitable energy and restless craving for activity and excitement which, despite all his professions of love for philosophic quiet, had been his life-long characteristic. The *Craftsman* was stimulated and guided much more directly by his inspiration than even by that of Pulteney. The *Craftsman* kept showering out articles, letters, verses, epigrams, all intended to damage the ministry, and more especially to destroy the reputation of Walpole. All was fish that came into the *Craftsman's* net. Every step taken by the Government, no matter what it might be, was made an occasion for ridicule, denunciation, and personal abuse. Not the slightest scruple was shown in the management of the *Craftsman*. If the policy of the Government seemed to tend towards a continental war, the *Craftsman* cried out for peace, and vituperated the minister who dared to think of involving England in the trumpery quarrels of foreign States. Walpole, however, we need hardly say, made it a set purpose of his administration to maintain peace on the Continent; and as soon as the patriots began to

Digitized by Google

find out in each particular instance that his policy was still the same, they turned round and shrieked against the minister whose feebleness and cowardice were laying England at the feet of foreign alliances and continental despots. Walpole worked in cordial alliance with the French Government, the principal member of which was now Cardinal Fleury. It became the object of the *Craftsman* to hold Walpole up to contempt and derision, as the dupe of a French Cardinal and the sycophant of a French Court. The example of the *Craftsman* was speedily followed by pamphleteers, caricaturists, satirists, and even ballad-mongers without end. London and the provinces were flooded with such literature. Walpole was described as 'Sir Blue String,' the blue string being a cheap satirical allusion to the blue ribbon which was supposed to adorn him as Knight of the Garter. He was styled Sir Robert Brass, Sir Robert Lynn, more often simple 'Robin' or plain 'Bob.' He was pictured as a systematic promoter of public corruption, as one who fattened on the taxation wrung from the miserable English taxpayer. His personal character, his domestic life, his household expenses, the habits of his wife, his own social and other enjoyments, were coarsely criticised and lampooned. The *Craftsman* and its imitators attacked not only Walpole himself, but Walpole's friends. The political satire of that day was as indiscriminate as it was unsparing. It was enough to be a political or even a personal friend of Walpole to become the object of the *Craftsman's* fierce blows. Pulteney did not even scruple to

Digitized by Google

betray the confidence of private conversation, and to disclose the words which, in some unguarded moments of former friendship, Walpolehad spoken of George the Second when George was Prince of Wales.

An excellent opportunity was soon given to Pulteney to make an open and a damaging attack on the ministry. Horace Walpole, British Ambassador to the French Court, had been brought over from Paris to explain and justify his brother's foreign policy. The Government put forward a resolution in the House of Commons on February 7, 1729, for a grant of some two hundred and fifty thousand pounds 'for defraying the expense of twelve thousand Hessians taken into His Majesty's pay.' Even if the maintenance of this force had been a positive necessity, which it certainly was not, it would, nevertheless, have been a necessity bringing with it disparagement and danger to the Government responsible for it. Pulteney made the most of the opportunity, and in a speech of fine old English flavour denounced the proposal of the ministers. He asked with indignation whether Englishmen were not brave enough or willing enough to defend their own country without calling in the assistance of foreign mercenaries. It might, he admitted, be some advantage to Hanover that German soldiers should be kept in the pay of England, but he wanted to know what benefit could come to the English people from paying and maintaining such a band. These men were kept, he declared, in the pay of England, not for the service of England, but for the service of Hanover. It need hardly be said that,

Digitized by Google

during all the earlier years of the Brunswick accession, a bare allusion to the name of Hanover was enough to stir an angry feeling in the minds of the larger number of the English people. Even the very men who most loyally supported the House of Brunswick winced and writhed under any allusion to the manner in which the interests of England were made subservient to the interests of Hanover. Pulteney therefore took every pains to chafe those sore places with remorseless energy. Sir William Wyndham supported Pulteney, and Sir Robert Walpole himself found it necessary to throw all his influence into the scale on the other side. His arguments were of a kind with which the House of Commons has been familiar during many generations. His main point was, that by maintaining a large body of soldiers, Hessian amongst the rest, the country had been enabled to avoid war. The Court of Vienna, with the assistance of Spanish subsidies, had been making preparation for war, Walpole contended; and were it not for the maintenance of this otherwise superfluous body of troops, the Emperor of Austria would probably never have accepted the terms of peace. 'If you desire peace, prepare for war,' may be an excellent maxim, but its value lies a good deal in its practical application. It is a remarkably elastic maxim, and in times nearer to our own than those of Walpole has been made to expand into a justification of the most extravagant and unnecessary military armaments, and of schemes of fortification which afterwards were abandoned before they had

Digitized by Google

been half realised. In this instance, however, there was something more to be said against the proposal of the Government. Some of the speakers in the debate pointed out that England in former days, if it engaged in a quarrel with its neighbours, fought the quarrel out with its own strength, and was not in the habit of buying and maintaining the forces of foreign princes to help Englishmen to hold their own. The resolution, of course, was carried. It was even carried by an overwhelming majority; 256 were on the 'court side,' as it was called, against 91 on the 'country side.' Fifty thousand pounds was also voted as 'one year's subsidy to the King of Sweden,' and twenty-five thousand pounds for one year's subsidy to the Duke of Brunswick. In order, however, to appease the consciences of some of those who supported the resolution as well as those who had opposed it, the Government permitted what we should now call a 'rider' to be added to the resolution requesting His Majesty that whenever it should be necessary to take any foreign troops into his service, 'he will graciously pleased to use his endeavours that they be be clothed with the manufactures of Great Britain.' It was supposed to be some solace to the wounded national pride of Englishmen to be assured that if they had to pay foreigners to fight for them the foreigners should at least not be allowed to come to this country clothed in the manufactures of their own land, but would be compelled to buy their garments over the counter of an English shop.

On Friday, February 21, an event which led

Digitized by Google

directly and indirectly to results of some importance occurred. Three petitions from the merchants trading in tobacco in London, Bristol, and Liverpool, were presented to the House of Commons. These petitions complained of great interruptions for several years past of the trade with the British colonies in America by the Spaniards. The depredations of the Spanish, it was said, endangered the entire loss of that valuable trade to England. The Spaniards were accused of having treated such of his Majesty's subjects as had fallen into their hands in a barbarous and cruel manner. The petitioners prayed for the consideration of the House of Commons, and such timely remedy as the House should think fit to recommend. These petitions only preceded a great many others, all in substance to the same effect. The Commons entered upon the consideration of the subject in a Committee of the whole House, heard several petitioners, and examined many witnesses. An address was presented to the Crown, asking for copies of all memorials, petitions, and representations to the late King or the present, in relation to Spanish captures of British ships. Copies were also asked for of the reports laid before the King by the commissioners of trade and of plantations, concerning the dispute between England and Spain, with regard to the rights of the subjects of Great Britain to cut logwood in the Bay of Campeachy, on the western shore of that Yucatan peninsula which juts into the Gulf of Mexico. English traders had been for a long time in the habit of cutting logwood along the shores in the Bay of

Digitized by Google

Campeachy, and the logwood trade had come to be one of the greatest importance to the West Indies and to England. The Spanish Government claimed the right to put a stop to this cutting of logwood, and the Spanish Viceroy and Governor had in some instances declared that they would dislodge the Englishmen from the settlements which they had established, and even treat them as pirates if they persisted in their trade. There was, in fact, all the material growing up for a serious quarrel between England and Spain.

Despite the recent treaties which were supposed to secure the peace of Europe, the times were very critical. 'The British nation,' says a contemporary writer, 'had for many years past been in a state of uncertainty, scarce knowing friends from foes, or indeed whether we had either.' Each new treaty seemed only to disturb the balance of power, as it was called, in a new way. The Quadruple Alliance was intended to rectify the defects of the Treaty of Utrecht; but it gave too much power to the Emperor, and it increased the bitterness and the discontent of the King of Spain. The Treaty of Vienna, made between the Empire and Spain, was justly regarded in England as portending danger to this country. It was even more dangerous than Englishmen in general supposed at the time, although Walpole knew its full purport and menace. The Treaty of Vienna led to the Treaty of Hanover, an arrangement made in the closing years of George the First's reign, between Great Britain, France, and Prussia, by virtue of

Digitized by Google

which if any one of the contracting parties were to be attacked, the other two were pledged to come to the assistance with funds and with arms. All these arrangements were in the highest degree artificial; some of them might fairly be described as unnatural. It might be taken for granted that not one of the States whom they professed to bind to this side or to that would hold to the engagements one hour longer than would serve her own interests. No safety was secured by these overlapping treaties; no one had any faith in them. It was quite true that England did not know her friends from her enemies about the time at which we have now arrived.

The dispute between England and Spain concerning the question of the Campeachy logwood was to involve a controversy as to the interpretation of certain passages in the Treaty of Utrecht. It was distinctly a matter for calm consideration, for compromise, and for an amicable settlement. But each of the two parties mainly concerned showed its desire to push its own claim to an extreme. English traders have never been particularly moderate or considerate in pressing their supposed rights to trade with foreign countries. In this instance they were strongly backed up, encouraged, and stimulated by the band of Englishmen who chose to call themselves the 'Patriots.' Few of the 'Patriots,' we venture to think, cared a rush about the question of the Campeachy logwood, or were very deeply grieved because Spain bore herself in a high-handed fashion towards certain English merchants and shipowners.

Digitized by Google

But the opportunity seemed to the 'Patriots' admirably adapted for worrying and harassing, not the Spaniards, but the administration of Sir Robert Walpole. They used the opportunity to the very full. The debates on the conduct of Spain brought out in the House of Lords the acknowledgment of the fact that King George I. had at one time actually written to the Government of Spain distinctly undertaking to bring about the restitution of Gibraltar. A copy of the letter in French, with a translation, was laid before the House. It seemed that on June 1, 1721, George, the late King, wrote to the King of Spain, 'Sir my brother,' a letter concerning the treaties then in the course of being re-established between England and Spain. In that letter occurred these words: 'I do no longer balance to assure your Majesty of my readiness to satisfy you with regard to your demand touching the restitution of Gibraltar; promising you to make use of the first favourable opportunity to regulate this article with the consent of my Parliament.' The House of Lords had a long and warm debate on this subject. A resolution was proposed declaring that 'for the honour of his Majesty, and the preservation and security of the trade and commerce of this kingdom,' care should be taken 'that the King of Spain do renounce all claim and pretension to Gibraltar and the island of Minorca, in plain and strong terms.' This resolution, however, was thought in the end to be rather too strong, and it was modified into a declaration that the Lords 'do entirely rely upon his Majesty, that

Digitized by Google

he will, for the maintaining the honour and securing the trade of this kingdom, take effectual care in the present treaty to preserve his undoubted right to Gibraltar and the island of Minorca.' This resolution was communicated to the House of Commons, and the Lords asked for a conference with that House in the Painted Chamber. The Commons had a long debate on the subject. The Opposition strongly denounced the ministers who had advised the late King to write such a letter, and declared that it implied a positive promise to surrender Gibraltar to Spain. The courtiers, as the supporters of the Ministry were then called, to distinguish them from the country party—that is to say, the Opposition—endeavoured to qualify and make light of the expressions used in the late King's letter, to show that they were merely hypothetical and conditional, and insisted that effectual care had since been taken in every way to maintain the right of England to Gibraltar. The country party moved that words be added to the Lords' resolution requiring 'that all pretensions on the part of the Crown of Spain to the said places be specifically given up.' Two hundred and sixty-seven votes, against one hundred and eleven, refused the addition of these words as unnecessary, and too much in the nature of a challenge and defiance to Spain. But the motion that 'this House does agree with the Lords in the said resolution' was carried without a division, the court party not venturing to offer any objection to it. The King received the address of both Houses on Tuesday, March 25, and returned an

Digitized by Google

answer thanking them for the confidence reposed in him, and assuring them that 'I will take effectual care, as I have hitherto done, to secure my undoubted right to Gibraltar and the island of Minorca.'

The difficulty was over for the present. The Government contrived to arrange a new treaty with Spain, the Treaty of Seville, in which France also was included. This treaty settled for the time the disputes about English trade with the New World, and the claims of Spain for a restoration of Gibraltar were, indirectly at least, given up. Perhaps the whole story is chiefly interesting now as affording an illustration of the manner in which the Patriots turned everything to account for their one great purpose of harassing the administration of Sir Robert Walpole. All the patriotic effusiveness about the undoubted right of England to Gibraltar was merely well-painted passion. Such sentiment as exists in the English mind with regard to the possession of 'the Rock' now, did not exist, had not had time to come into existence, then. Gibraltar was taken in 1704; its possession was confirmed to England by the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713. Since that time English ministers had again and again been considering the expediency of restoring Gibraltar to the Spaniards. Stanhope had been in favour of the restoration; Townshend and Carteret had been in favour of it. Some of the Patriots themselves, before they came to be dubbed Patriots, had been in favour of it. Only the unreasonable and insolent behaviour of Spain herself stood at one time in the way of the restitution. Gibraltar was one capture,

Digitized by Google

like many others; captured territory changed and changed hands with each new arrangement in those days. Minorca, which was included with Gibraltar in the resolution of the two Houses of Parliament and the consequent promise of the King, was taken by the English forces shortly after the capture of Gibraltar, and was settled upon England by the same Treaty of Utrecht. Yet, as we all know, it was given up by England at the Peace of Amiens, and no tears of grief were shed by any English eyes. But the discovery that the late King had at one time been willing to restore Gibraltar to Spain for a consideration came in most opportunely for the Patriots. To most of them it was, of course, no discovery at all. They had always known of the intention, and some of them had approved of it. None the less shrill were their cries of surprise; none the less vociferous their shouts of patriotic anger.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XX.

A VICTORY FOR THE PATRIOTS.

LITERATURE lost some great names in the early part of George the Second's reign. William Congreve and Richard Steele both died in 1729. Congreve's works do not belong to the time of which we are writing. He was not sixty years old when he died, and he had long ceased to take any active part in literature. Swift deplores, in a letter to an acquaintance, 'the death of our friend Mr. Congreve, whom I loved from my youth, and who surely, besides his other talents, was a very agreeable companion.' Swift adds that Congreve 'had the misfortune to squander away a very good constitution in his younger days,' and 'upon his own account I could not much desire the continuance of his life under so much pain and so many infirmities.' Congreve was beyond comparison the greatest English comic dramatist of his time. Since the days of Ben Jonson and until the days of Sheridan there was no one who could fairly be compared with him. His comedy was not in the least like the bold, broad, healthy, Aristophanic humour of Ben Jonson; the two stand better in contrast than in comparison. Jonson drew from the whole living English world of his time;

Digitized by Google

Congreve drew from the men and women whom he had seen in society. Congreve took society as he found it in his earlier days. The men and women with whom he then mixed were for the most part flippant, insincere, corrupt, and rather proud of their corruption; and Congreve filled his plays with figures very lifelike for such a time. He has not drawn many men or women whom one could admire. Even his heroines, if they are chaste in their lives, are anything but pure in their conversation, and seem to have no moral principle beyond that which is represented by what Heine calls an 'anatomical chastity.' Angelica, the heroine of 'Love for Love,' is evidently meant by Congreve to be all that a charming young Englishwoman ought to be; and she is charming, fresh, and fascinating even still. But she occasionally talks in a manner which would be a little strong for a barrack-room now; and nothing gives her more genuine delight than to twit her kind, fond old uncle with his wife's infidelities, to make it clear to him that all the world is acquainted with the full particulars of his shame, and to sport with his jealous agonies. Congreve was the first dramatic author who put an English seaman on the stage; and, after his characteristic fashion, he made his Ben Legend a selfish, coarse, and ruffianly lout. But if one cannot admire many of Congreve's characters, on the other hand one cannot help admiring every sentence they speak. The only fault to be found with their talk is that it is too witty, too brilliant, for any manner of real life. Society would have to be all composed of male and

Digitized by Google

female Congreves to make such conversation possible. There is more strength, originality, and depth in it than even in the conversation in 'The Rivals' and 'The School for Scandal.' The same fault has been found with Sheridan which is to be found with Congreve. We need not make too much of it. No warning example is called for. There will never be many dramatists whose dialogue will deserve the censure of critics on the ground that it is too witty.

Of Steele we have often had occasion to speak. His fame has been growing rather than fading with time. At one period he was ranked by critics as far below the level of Addison; few men now would not set him on a pedestal as high. He was more natural, more simple, more fresh than Addison. There is some justice in the remark of Hazlitt that 'Steele seems to have gone into his closet chiefly to set down what he had observed out of doors;' while Addison appears 'to have spent most of his time in his study,' spinning out to the utmost there the hints 'which he borrowed from Steele or took from nature.' Every one, however, will cordially say, with Hazlitt, 'I am far from wishing to depreciate Addison's talents, but I am anxious to do justice to Steele.' There are not many names in English literature round which a greater affection clings than that of Steele. Leigh Hunt, in writing of Congreve, speaks of 'the love of the highest aspirations' which he sometimes displays, and which makes us think of what he might have been under happier and purer auspices. Leigh Hunt refers in especial to Congreve's essay in the *Tatler*

Digitized by Google

on the character of Lady Elizabeth Hastings, whom Congreve calls Aspasia—'an effusion so full of enthusiasm for the moral graces, and worded with an appearance of sincerity so cordial, that we can never read it without thinking it must have come from Steele.' 'It is in this essay,' Leigh Hunt goes on, 'that he says one of the most elegant and truly loving things that were ever uttered by an unworldly passion: "To love her is a liberal education."' Leigh Hunt's critical judgment was better than his information. The words 'to love her is a liberal education' are by Steele, and not by Congreve. They do not appear in the essay by Congreve on the character of Lady Elizabeth Hastings, but in a subsequent essay by Steele, in which, after a fashion common enough in the *Tatler* and the *Spectator*, one author takes up some figure created or described by another, and gives it new touches and commends it afresh to the reader. Steele was doing this with Congreve's picture of Aspasia, and it was then that he crowned the whole work by the exquisite and immortal words which Leigh Hunt could never read without thinking they must have come from the man who was in fact their author.

If literature had its losses in these years, it had also its gains. Not long before the time at which we have now arrived English literature had achieved three great successes. Pope wrote the first three books of his 'Dunciad,' Swift published his 'Gulliver's Travels,' and Gay set the town wild with his 'Beggar's Opera.' We are far from any thought of

Digitized by Google

classifying the 'Beggar's Opera' as a work of art on a level with the 'Dunciad' or 'Gulliver's Travels,' but in its way it is a masterpiece. It is thoroughly original, fresh, and vivid. It added one or two distinctly new figures to the humorous drama. It is clever as a satire and charming as a story. One cannot be surprised that when it had the attraction of novelty the public raved about it. To say anything about 'Gulliver's Travels' or the 'Dunciad,' except to note the historical fact that each was published, would of course be mere superfluity and waste of words.

In 1731 the first steps were taken in a reform of some importance in the literature of our legal procedure. It was arranged that English should be substituted for Latin in the presentments, indictments, pleadings, and all other documents used in our courts of law. The early stages of this most wise and needful reform were met with much opposition by lawyers and pedants. One main argument employed in favour of the retention of the old system was that, if the language of our legal documents were to be changed, no man would be at the pains of studying Latin any more, and that in a few years no one would be able to read a word of some of our own most valuable historical records. It was mildly suggested on the other side that there would always be some men among us who, 'either out of curiosity or for the sake of gain,' would make it their business to keep up the knowledge of Latin, and that a very few of such antiquarians would suffice to give the country all the information drawn from Latin records

Digitized by Google

which it could possibly require or care to have. We have had some experience since that time, and it does not appear that the disuse of Latin in our legal documents has led to its falling into absolute disuse among reading men. There are still among us, and apparently will always be, persons who, 'either out of curiosity or for the sake of gain,' keep up their knowledge of Latin. The curiosity to read Virgil, and Horace, and Cicero, and Cæsar, in the tongue which those authors employed, is more keen than it ever was before. Men indulge themselves freely in it, even without reference to the sake of gain.

Meanwhile, a change long foreseen by those who were in the inner political circles was rapidly approaching. The combination between Walpole and his brother-in-law, Lord Townshend, was about to be broken up. It had for a long time been a question whether it was to be the firm of Townshend and Walpole, or Walpole and Townshend; and of late years the question was becoming settled. If the firm was to endure at all, it must clearly be Walpole and Townshend. Walpole had been growing every day in power and influence. The King, as well as the Queen, treated him openly and privately as the head of the Government. Townshend saw this, and felt bitterly aggrieved. He had for a long time been a much more powerful personage socially than Walpole, and he could not bear with patience the supremacy which Walpole was all too certainly obtaining. Great part of that supremacy was due to Walpole's superiority of talents; but something was due also

Digitized by Google

to the fact that the House of Commons was becoming a much more important assembly than the House of Lords. The result was inevitable. Townshend for a long time struggled against it. He tried to intrigue against Walpole; he did his best to ingratiate himself with the King. He was a man of austere character and stainless life; but he seems, nevertheless, to have tried at one time the merest arts of the political intriguer to supplant his brother-in-law in the favour and confidence of the King. Perhaps he might have succeeded—it is at least possible—but for the watchful intelligence of Queen Caroline. She saw through all Townshend's schemes, and took care that they should not succeed. At last the two rivals quarrelled. Their quarrel broke out very openly, in the drawing-room of a lady, and in the presence of several distinguished persons. From hot words they were going on to a positive personal struggle, when the spectators at last intervened to 'pluck them asunder,' in the words of the King in 'Hamlet.' They were plucked asunder, and then there was talk of a duel. The friends of both succeeded in preventing this scandal, but the brothers-in-law were never thoroughly reconciled, and after a short time Lord Townshend resigned his office. He withdrew from public life altogether, and devoted his remaining years to the enjoyment of the country and the practical study of agriculture. It is to his credit that when once he had given way to the superior influence of Walpole, he did not afterwards cabal against him, or try to injure him, according to the fashion of the statesmen

Digitized by Google

of the time. On the contrary, when he was once pressed to join in an attack on Walpole's ministry, he firmly refused to do anything of the kind. He said he had resolved to take no further part in political contests, and he did not mean to break his resolution. He was particularly determined not to depart from his resolve in this case, he explained, because his temper was hot, and he was apprehensive that he might be hurried away by personal resentment to take a course which in his cooler moments he should have to regret. Nothing in his public life, perhaps, became him so well as his dignified conduct in his retirement. His place in history is not strongly marked; in this history we shall not hear of him any more.

Colonel Stanhope, who had made the Treaty of Seville, and had been raised to the peerage as Lord Harrington for his services, succeeded Townshend as Secretary of State. Horace Walpole, the brother of Robert, was at his own request recalled from Paris. Walpole, the Prime Minister, had begun to see that it would be necessary for the future to have something like a good understanding with Austria. The friendship with France had been a priceless advantage in its time, but Walpole believed that it had served its turn. It was valuable to England chiefly because it had enabled the Sovereign to keep the movements of the Stuart party in check, and Walpole hoped that the House of Hanover was now secure on the throne, and believed, with too sanguine a confidence, that no other effort would be made to disturb it. Moreover,

Digitized by Google

he saw some reason to think that France, no longer guided by the political intelligence of a man like the Duke of Orleans, was drawing a little too close in her relationship with Spain. Walpole was already looking forward to the coming of a time when it might be necessary for England to strengthen herself against France and Spain, and he therefore desired to get into a good understanding with the Emperor and Austria.

Walpole now had the Government entirely to himself. He was not merely all-powerful in the administration, he actually was the administration. The King knew him to be indispensable; the Queen put the fullest trust in him. His only trouble was with the intrigues of Bolingbroke and the opposition of Pulteney. The latter sometimes affected what would have been called at the time a 'mighty unconcern' about political affairs. Writing once to Pope, he says, 'Mrs. Pulteney is now in labour; if she does well and brings me a boy, I shall not care one sixpence how much longer Sir Robert governs England, or Horace governs France.' This was written while Horace Walpole was still Ambassador at the French Court. Pulteney, however, was very far from feeling anything like the philosophical indifference which he expressed in his letter to Pope. He never ceased to attack everything done by the Ministry, and to satirise every word said by Walpole. At the same time Pulteney was complaining bitterly to his friends of the attacks made on him by the supporters of Walpole. On February 9, 1730, he

Digitized by Google

wrote a letter to Swift in which he says that 'certain people' had been driven by want of argument 'to that last resort of calling names; villain, traitor, seditious rascal, and such ingenious appellations have frequently been bestowed on a couple of friends of yours.' 'Such usage,' he complacently adds, 'has made it necessary to return the same polite language; and there has been more Billingsgate stuff uttered from the press within these two months than ever was known before.' Swift himself had previously written to his friend Dr. Sheridan a letter in which he declared that 'Walpole is peevish and disconcerted, stoops to the vilest offices of hireling scoundrels to write Billingsgate of the lowest and most prostitute kind, and has none but beasts and blockheads for his penmen, whom he pays in ready guineas very liberally.' One would have thought that beasts and blockheads could hardly prove very formidable enemies to Swift and Bolingbroke and Pulteney.

One of the incidents in the controversy carried on by the Ministerial penmen and the *Craftsman* was a duel between Pulteney and Lord Hervey. Pulteney and his friends were apparently under the impression that they had a right to a monopoly of personal abuse, and they resented any effusion of the kind from the other side as a breach of their privilege. Hervey had written a tract called 'Sedition and Defamation displayed; in a Letter to the Author of the *Craftsman*;' and this led to a new outburst of passion on both sides. Pulteney stigmatised Hervey, on account of his effeminate appearance, as a thing that was half

Digitized by Google

man, half woman, and a duel took place, in which Hervey was wounded. Hervey was a remarkable man. His physical frame was as feeble as that of Voltaire. He suffered from epilepsy and a variety of other ailments. He had to live mainly on a dietary of ass's milk. His face was so meagre and so pallid, or rather livid, that he used to paint and make up like an actress or a fine lady. Pope, who might have been considerate to the weak of frame, was merciless in his ridicule of Hervey. He ridiculed him as Sporus, who could neither feel satire nor sense, and as Lord Fanny. Yet Hervey could appreciate satire and sense; could write satire and sense. He was a man of very rare capacity. He had already distinguished himself as a debater in the House of Commons, and was afterwards to distinguish himself as a debater in the House of Lords. He wrote pretty verses and clever pamphlets, and he has left to the world a collection of 'Memoirs of the Reign of George the Second' which will always be read for its vivacity, its pungency, its bitterness, and its keen penetrating good sense. Hervey succeeded in obtaining the hand of one of the most beautiful women of the day, the charming Mary Lepell, whose name has been celebrated in more than one poetical panegyric by Pope, and he captivated the heart of one of the royal princesses. The historical reader must strike a sort of balance for himself in getting at an estimate of Hervey's character. No man has been more bitterly denounced by his enemies or more warmly praised by his friends. Affectation, insincerity, prodigality,

Digitized by Google

selfishness, servility to the great, contempt for the humble, are among the qualities his opponents ascribe to him. According to his friends, his cynicism was a mere affectation to hide a sensitive and generous nature; his bitterness arose from his disappointment at finding so few men or women who came up to a really high standard of nobleness; his homage of the great was but the half-disguised mockery of a scornful philosopher. Probably the picture drawn by the friends is on the whole more near to life than that painted by the enemies. The world owes him some thanks for a really interesting book, the very boldness and bitterness of which enhance to a certain extent its historical value. At this time Hervey was but little over thirty years of age. He was the son of the first Earl of Bristol by a second marriage, had been educated at Westminster School and at Clare Hall, Cambridge; had gone early through the usual round of Continental travels, and became a friend of George the First's grandson, now Prince of Wales, at Hanover. This friendship not merely did not endure, but soon turned into hate. Hervey was an admirer of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, and was admired by her; but her own assurances, which may be trusted to, declared that there had been nothing warmer than friendship between them. Lady Mary afterwards maintained that the relationship between Hervey and her established the possibility of 'a long and steady friendship subsisting between two persons of different sexes without the least admixture of love.' Hervey was in his day a somewhat free and liberal lover of

Digitized by Google

women, and it is not surprising that the world should have regarded his acquaintanceship with Lady Mary as something warmer than mere friendship. We shall have occasion to refer to Hervey's memoirs of the reign of George the Second more than once hereafter, and may perhaps now cite a few words which Hervey himself says in vindication of their sincerity and their historical accuracy :—

'No one who did not live in these times will, I dare say, believe but some of those I describe in these papers must have had some hard features and deformities exaggerated and heightened by the malice and ill-nature of the painter who drew them. Others, perhaps, will say that at least no painter is obliged to draw every wart or wen or hump-back in its full proportions, and that I might have softened these blemishes where I found them. But I am determined to report everything just as it is, or at least just as it appears to me ; and those who have a curiosity to see courts and courtiers dissected, must bear with the dirt they find in laying open such minds with as little nicety and as much patience as, in a dissection of their bodies, if they wanted to see that operation, they must submit to the disgust.'

Hervey fought with spirit and effect on the side of Walpole, although Lady Hervey strongly disliked the minister and was disliked by him. Walpole had at one time, it was said, made unsuccessful love to the beautiful and witty Molly Lepell, and he did not forgive her because of her scornful rejection of his ponderous attempts at gallantry. Hervey neverthe-

Digitized by Google

less took Walpole's side, and proved to be an ally of some importance. A great struggle was approaching, in which the whole strength of Walpole's hold on the Sovereign and the country was to be tested by the severest strain.

Walpole was, as we have said more than once, the first of the great financier statesmen of England. He was the first statesman who properly appreciated the virtue and the value of mere economy in the disposal of a nation's revenues. He was the first to devise anything like a solid and symmetrical plan for the fair adjustment of taxation. Sometimes he had recourse to rather poor and commonplace artifices, as in the case of his proposal to meet a certain financial strain by borrowing half a million from the Sinking Fund. This proposal he carried by a large majority, in spite of the most vehement and even furious opposition on the part of the Patriots. It must be owned that the Patriots were right enough in the principle of their objection to this encroachment on the Sinking Fund, although their predictions as to the ruin it must bring upon the country were preposterous. Borrowing from a sinking fund is always rather a shabby dodge; but it is a trick familiar to all statesmen in difficulties, and Walpole did no worse than many statesmen of later days, who, with the full advantages of a sound and well-developed financial system, have shown that they were not able to do any better.

The Patriots seem to have made up their minds to earn their title. They fought the 'Court,' or

Digitized by Google

ministerial, party on a variety of issues. They supported motions for the reduction of the numbers of the army, and they declaimed against the whole principle of a standing army with patriotic passion, which sometimes appeared for the time quite genuine. They brought illustrations of all kinds, applicable and inapplicable, from Greek and Roman, from French and Spanish history, even from Eastern history, to show that a standing army was invariably the instrument of despotism and the forerunner of doom to the liberties of a people. The financial policy of the Government gave them frequent opportunities for using the sword of the partisan behind the fluttering cloak of the patriot. On both sides of the House there was considerable confusion of ideas on the subject of political economy and the incidence of taxation. Walpole was ahead of his own party as well as of his opponents on such subjects; his followers were little more enlightened than his antagonists.

In 1732 there was presented to the House of Commons an interesting report from the Commissioners for Trade and Plantations on 'the state of his Majesty's colonies and plantations in America, with respect to any laws made, manufactures set up, and trade carried on there, which may affect the trade, navigation, and manufactures of this kingdom.' From this report we learn that at the time there were three different systems of government prevailing in the American colonies. Some provinces were immediately under the administration of the Crown: these were Nova Scotia, New Hampshire, the Jerseys, New

Digitized by Google

York, Virginia, the two Carolinas, Bermuda, Bahama Islands, Jamaica, Barbadoes, and the Leeward Islands. Others were vested in proprietors—Pennsylvania, for example, and Maryland—and the Bahamas and the two Carolinas had not long before been in the same condition. There were three Charter Governments, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut, in which the power was divided between the Crown and the population, where the people chose their representative assemblies, and the Governor was dependent upon the Assembly for his annual support, 'which,' as the report observed ingenuously, 'has so frequently laid the Governor of such a province under temptations of giving up the prerogative of the Crown and the interest of Great Britain.' The report contains a very full account of the state of manufactures in all the provinces. New York, for example, had no manufactures 'that deserved mentioning;' the trade there 'consisted chiefly in furs, whalebone, oil, pitch, tar, and provisions.' In Massachusetts 'the inhabitants worked up their wool and flax, and made an ordinary coarse cloth for their own use, but did not export any.' In Pennsylvania the 'chief trade lay in the exportation of provisions and lumber,' and there were 'no manufactures established, their clothing and utensils for their houses being all imported from Great Britain.' For the object of the whole report was not to discover how far the energy of the colonists was developing the resources of the colonies, in order that the Government and the people of England might be gratified with a knowledge of the

Digitized by Google

progress made, and give their best encouragement to further progress. The inquiry was set on foot in order to find out whether the colonists were presuming to manufacture for themselves any goods which they ought by right to buy from English makers, and to recommend steps by which such audacious enterprises might be rebuked and prevented. This is the avowed object of the report, and we find governor after governor assuring the Commissioners earnestly and plaintively that the population of his province really manufacture nothing, or at all events nothing that could possibly interfere with the sacred privileges of the English monopolists. The report significantly recommends the House of Commons to take into consideration the question 'whether it might not be expedient to give these colonies proper encouragements for turning their industry to such manufactures and products as might be of service to Great Britain, and more particularly to the production of all kinds of naval stores.' The proper encouragement given to this sort of productiveness would imply, of course, proper discouragement given to anything else. The colonies were to exist merely for the convenience and benefit of the so-called mother country, a phrase surely of sardonic impressiveness. Such, however, was the common feeling of that day in England. It was so with regard to India; it was so with regard to Ireland. The story of the pelican was reversed. The pelican did not in this case feed her young with her blood; the young were expected to give their blood to feed the pelican.

Digitized by Google

The real strain was to come when Walpole should introduce his famous and long-expected scheme for a reform in the customs and excise laws. Walpole's scheme was inspired by two central ideas. One of these was to diminish the amount of taxation imposed on the land of the country, and make up the deficiency by indirect taxation; the other was to reduce the customs duties by substituting as far as possible an excise duty. Walpole would have desired something like free trade as regarded the introduction of food and the raw materials of manufacture. Let these be got into the country as easily and freely as possible, was his principle, and then let us see afterwards how we can adjust the excise duties so as to produce the largest amount of revenue with the smallest injury to the interest of the consumer, and with the minimum of waste. His design was that the necessaries of life and the raw materials of manufacture should remain as nearly as possible untaxed, and that the revenue of the country should be collected from land and from luxuries. We do not mean to say that the plans which Walpole presented to the country were faithful in all their details to these central ideas. One scheme at least which he laid before Parliament was positively at variance with the main principles which he had long been trying to establish. But in considering the whole controversy between him and his opponents the reader may take it for granted that such were the principles by which his financial policy was inspired. He had been moving quietly in this direction for some time. He had removed the import

Digitized by Google

duties from tea, coffee, and chocolate, and made them subject to inland or excise duties. In 1732 he revived the salt tax. The bill which was introduced on February 9, 1732, to accomplish this object, met with a strong opposition in both Houses of Parliament. Walpole's speech in introducing the motion for the revival of the tax contained a very clear statement of his financial creed: 'Where every man contributes a small share, a great sum may be raised for the public service without any man's being sensible of what he pays; whereas a small sum raised upon a few lies heavy upon each particular man, and is the more grievous in that it is unjust; for where the benefit is mutual the expense ought to be in common.' The general principle is unassailable; but Walpole seems to us to have been quite wrong in his application of it to such an impost as the salt tax. 'Of all the taxes I ever could think of,' he argued, 'there is not one more general, nor one less felt, than that of the duty upon salt.' He described it as a 'tax that every man in the nation contributes to according to his circumstances and condition in life.' This is exactly what every man does not do. The family of the rich man does not by any means consume more salt than the family of the poor man in proportion to their respective incomes. Pulteney knocked Walpole's argument all to pieces in a speech of remarkable force and ingenuity even for him. There was something honestly pathetic in his appeal on behalf of the poor man, whom the duty on salt would touch most nearly. The tax, he said, would be at least one shilling a head for every

Digitized by Google

man or woman able to work ; to a man with a family it would average four shillings and sixpence a year. Such a yearly sum 'may be looked upon as a trifle by a gentleman of a large estate and easy circumstances, but a poor man feels sometimes severely the want of a shilling; many a poor man has for want of a shilling been obliged to pawn the only whole coat he had to his back, and has never been able to redeem it again. Even a farthing to a poor man is a considerable sum ; what shifts do the frugal among them make to save even a farthing !'

Had all Pulteney's speech been animated by this spirit he would have made out an unanswerable case. The objection to a salt tax in England then was not so great as in India at a later period ; but the principle of the tax was undoubtedly bad, while the general principle of Walpole's finance was undoubtedly good. The question, however, was not argued out by Pulteney or any other speaker on his side upon such a ground as the hardship to the poor man. The tyranny of an excise system, of any excise system, its unconstitutional, despotic, and inquisitorial nature —this was the chief ground of attack. Sir William Wyndham sounded the alarm which was soon to be followed by a tremendous echo. He declared the proposed tax 'not only destructive to the trade, but inconsistent with the liberties of this nation.' The very number of the officers who would have to be appointed to collect this one tax, who would be named by the Crown and scattered all over the country, would have immense influence on the elections ; and

Digitized by Google

this fact alone would give a power into the hands of the Crown greater than was consistent with the liberties of the people, and 'of the most dangerous consequence to our happy constitution.' The Bill passed the House of Commons, and was read a first time in the House of Lords on March 22. The second reading was moved on March 27, and a long debate took place. Not the least interesting fact concerning this debate was that the leading part in opposition to the Bill was taken by Lord Carteret, who had returned from his Irish Government, and was beginning to show himself a pertinacious and a formidable enemy of Walpole and his administration. Carteret outshone even Pulteney and Wyndham in wholesale and extravagant denunciation of the measure. He likened it to the domestic policy of Cardinal Richelieu, by which the estates of the nobility and gentry were virtually confiscated to the Crown, and the liberties of the people were lost. It would place it in the power of a wicked administration to reduce the English people to the same condition as the people in Turkey; 'their only resource will be in mobs and tumults, and the prevailing party will administer justice by general massacres and proscriptions.' All this may now seem sheer absurdity; but for the purposes of Carteret and Pulteney it was by no means absurd. The salt tax was carried through the House of Lords; but the public out of doors were taught to believe that the minister's financial policy was merely a series of artifices for the destruction of

Digitized by Google

popular rights, and for robbing England of her political liberty.

Walpole had long had in his mind a measure of a different nature, a measure to readjust the duties on tobacco and wine. It was known that he was preparing some Bill on the subject, and the excitement which was beginning to show itself at the time of the salt tax debates was turned to account by the Opposition to forestall the popular reception of the expected measure. The cry was got up that the administration were planning a scheme for a general excise, and the bare idea of a general excise was then odious and terrible to the public. Whatever Walpole's final purposes may have been, there was nothing to alarm any one in the scheme which he was presently to introduce. Nobody now would think of impugning the soundness of the economical principles on which his moderate, limited, and tentative scheme of fiscal reform was founded.

The coming event threw its shadow before it, and the shadow became marvellously distorted. Pulteney, speaking on February 23, 1733, with regard to the Sinking Fund proposal, talked of the expected excise scheme in language of such exaggeration that it is impossible to believe the orator could have felt anything like the alarm and horror he expressed. There is 'a very terrible affair impending,' Pulteney said, 'a monstrous project—yea, more monstrous than has ever yet been represented. It is such a project as has struck terror into the minds of most gentlemen within this House, and into the minds of all men without doors

Digitized by Google

who have any regard to the happiness or to the constitution of their country. I mean that monster the excise; that plan of arbitrary power which is expected to be laid before this House in the present session of Parliament.' Sir John Barnard, one of the members for the City of London, a man of great respectability, capacity, and influence, ventured to predict that Walpole's scheme would 'turn out to be his eternal shame and dishonour, and that the more the project is examined and the consequences thereof considered, the more the projector will be hated and despised.'

Of all this strong language Walpole took little account. He meant to propose his scheme, he said, when the proper time should come, and he did not doubt but that honourable members would find it something very different from the vague and monstrous project of which they had been told. In any case he meant to propose it. Accordingly, on Wednesday, March 7, 1733, Walpole moved that the House should on that day week resolve itself into a committee 'to consider of the most proper methods for the better security and improvement of the duties and revenues already charged upon and payable from tobacco and wines.' On the day appointed, Wednesday, March 14, the House went into committee accordingly, and Walpole expounded his scheme. It was simply a plan to deal with the duties on wines and tobacco, and Walpole protested that his views and purposes were confined altogether to these two branches of the revenue, and that such a thing as a scheme for a general excise

Digitized by Google

had never entered into his head, 'nor, for what I know, into the head of any man I am acquainted with.' There was in the mind of the English people then a vague horror of all excise laws and excise officers, and the whole opposition to Walpole's scheme in and out of the House of Commons was maintained by an appeal to that common feeling. Walpole's resolutions with regard to the tobacco trade were taken first and separately. It will soon be seen that the resolutions concerning the duties on wine were destined never to be discussed at all. What Walpole proposed to do in regard to tobacco was to make the customs duty very small and to increase the excise duty; to establish bonded warehouses for the storing of the tobacco imported into this country, and meant to be exported again or sold here for home consumption; thus to encourage and facilitate the importation; to get rid of many of the dishonest practices which injured the fair dealer and defrauded the revenue; to put a stop to smuggling; to benefit at once the grower, the manufacturer, the consumer, and the revenue. We need not relate at great length and in minute detail the history of these resolutions and of the debates on them in the House of Commons. But it may be pointed out that wild and absurd as were the outcries of the Patriots, there yet was good reason for their apprehension of a growing scheme to substitute excise for land tax, or poll tax, or customs. Walpole was, as we know, a firm believer in the advantages of indirect taxation, and of the introduction, as freely as possible, of all raw materials for manufacture and all articles

Digitized by Google

useful for the food of a nation. He was a free-trader before his time, and he saw that in certain cases there was immense advantage to the consumer and to the revenue in allowing articles to be imported under as light a duty as possible, and then putting an excise duty on their distribution here. Walpole was perfectly right in all this, but his enemies were none the less justified in proclaiming that the proposals he was introducing could not end in a mere readjustment of the tobacco and wine duties.

Walpole's first resolution was carried by 266 votes against 205. The Government had won a victory, but it was such a victory as Walpole did not care to win. He had been used of late to bear down all before him, and he saw with eyes of clear foreboding the ominous significance of his present majority. He knew well that the Opposition had got the most telling cry they could possibly have sought or found against him. He knew that popular tumult would grow from day to day. He knew that his enemies were unscrupulous, and that they were banded together against him on many grounds, and with many different purposes. Every section of the nation which had any hostile feeling to the House of Hanover, to the existing administration, or to the Prime Minister himself, made common cause against, not his Excise Bill, but him. The tobacco resolutions were passed, and a Bill to put them into execution was ordered to be prepared. On April 4 the Bill was introduced to the House of Commons, and a motion was made that it be read a first time. Much, however, had happened

Digitized by Google

out of doors since the day when Walpole introduced his resolutions. Even at that time there was a great excitement abroad, which brought crowds of more or less tumultuous persons round the entrances of the House of Commons. The troops had to be kept in readiness for any emergency that might arise. The least thing feared was that they might have to be employed to keep the access to the House clear for its members. By the time the first division had taken place the tide of popular passion had swollen still higher. As Walpole was quitting the House a furious rush was made at him, and but that some of his colleagues surrounded, protected, and bore him off, he would have been in serious personal danger. But the interval between that event and the introduction of the Bill had been turned to very practical account by those who were agitating against him, and the country was now in a flame of excitement. The *Craftsman* and the pamphleteers had done their work well. The most extravagant consequences were described as certain to follow from the adoption of Walpole's excise scheme. A minister once allowed to impose his excise duty upon wine and tobacco, and—thus shrieked the mouths of a hundred pamphleteers and verse-mongers—he will go on imposing excise on every article of food, and dress, and household use. Nothing will be able to resist the inquisitorial exciseman. It was positively asserted in ballad and in pamphlet that before long the exciseman would everywhere practise on the daughters of England the atrociously insulting test which was attempted on

Digitized by Google

Wat Tyler's daughter, and which brought about Wat Tyler's insurrection. The memories of Wat Tyler and of Jack Straw were invoked to arouse popular panic and fury. Strange as it may now seem, these appeals were successful in their object; they did create a popular panic, and stir up popular passion and fury to the uttermost height. Not even Walpole attempted any longer to argue down the monstrous misrepresentations of his policy. The fury against him and his excise scheme grew hotter every day, and at one time it was positively thought that his life was in danger. Tumultuous crowds of people gathered in and around all the approaches to the House of Commons. Several members of the House who were known to be in favour of the ministerial scheme complained that they had been menaced, insulted, and even assaulted; and the House had for the security of its own debates, and the personal safety of its own members, to pass resolutions declaring that this riotous behaviour was destructive of the freedom and constitution of Parliament, and a high crime and misdemeanour. In the House itself certain tactics, with which Parliament has been very familiar at a later period, were tried with some effect. Various motions for adjournment and other such delay to the progress of the Bill were made and pressed to a division. It was becoming evident to every one that the measure was doomed, and the hearts of the leaders of Opposition rose with each hour that passed, while the spirits of the Ministerialists fell.

Digitized by Google

Walpole never lost his head, although he well knew that a certain and a damaging failure was now awaiting him. He still proclaimed that his measure could be hurtful to none but smugglers and unfair traders, that it would be of great benefit to the revenue and the nation, that it would tend 'to make London a free port, and by consequence the market of the world.' He spoke with scorn of the riotous crowds whom some had declared to be merely respectful petitioners. 'Gentlemen may give them what name they think fit; it may be said that they came hither as humble suppliants, but I know whom the law calls sturdy beggars.' The Common Council of London, spirited on by a Jacobite Lord Mayor, petitioned against the excise scheme, and its example was followed by various municipalities in the kingdom. Walpole acted at last according to the principle which always governed him at such a crisis. He had the courage to abandon the ground which he had taken up, and which he would have been well entitled to maintain if argument could prevail over misrepresentation and passion. With that cool contempt for the extravagance and the ignorance of the sentiment which thwarted him, he abandoned his scheme and let the mob have its way. On Wednesday, April 11, 1733, it was made known that the Government did not intend to go any further with the Bill. Exultation all over the island was unbounded. Church bells rang, windows were illumined, bonfires blazed, multitudes shouted everywhere. If England had gained some splendid victory over a combination

Digitized by Google

of foreign enemies, there could not have been a greater display of frantic national enthusiasm than that which broke out when it was found that hostile clamour had prevailed against the minister, and that his excise scheme was abandoned.

Frederick the Great has enriched the curiosities of history with an account which he gives of the abandonment of the Bill. According to him, George the Second had devised the measure as a means of making himself absolute sovereign of England. The Excise Bill was intended to put him in possession of a revenue fixed and assured, a revenue large enough to allow him to increase his military power to any strength he pleased. It only needed a word of command and a chief for revolution to break out. Walpole escaped from Parliament covered with an old cloak, and shouting with all his might, 'Liberty, liberty! no excise!' Thus disguised, he managed to get to the King in St. James's Palace. He found the King preparing for the worst, arming himself at all points, having put on the hat he wore at Malplaquet, and trying the temper of the sword he carried at Oudenarde. George desired to put himself at once at the head of his guards, and try conclusions with his enemies. Walpole had all the trouble in the world to moderate his sovereign's impetuosity, and at length represented to him, 'with the generous hardihood of an Englishman attached to his master,' that it was only a choice between abandoning the Excise Bill and losing the crown. Whereupon George at last

Digitized by Google

gave way; the Bill was abandoned, and the crown preserved.

This scene is, of course, a piece of the purest romance. But it is certain that the passions of the people were so thoroughly aroused, that a man less cool and in the true sense courageous than Walpole might have provoked a popular outbreak, and no one can say whether the crown of the Brunswicks might not have gone down in a popular outbreak just then. Time and education have long since vindicated Walpole's financial principles; but the passion, the ignorance, and the partisanship of his own day were too strong, and prevailed against him.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

LONDON: PRINTED BY
SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE
AND PARLIAMENT STREET

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google